CLERICAL COLLOQUIES

ARTHUR BARRY O'NEILL, C. S. C.

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ESSAYS AND DIALOGUES
ON
SUBJECTS SACERDOTAL

BY
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TO

My Mother

IN MEMORY

OF THE VALIANT WOMAN WHO GAVE ME EARTHLY LIFE, AND

IN HONOR

OF THE IMMACULATE QUEEN THROUGH WHOSE POTENT INTERCESSION I HOPE FOR LIFE ETERNAL, THIS BOOK IS

Lovingly Dedicated

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FOREWORD

WHEN a performer on the public or private stage, having sung his song, delivered his monologue, or played his solo on piano or violin, makes his bow to his audience and retires behind the scenes, he is naturally interested in the quantity and quality of the plaudits that greet his effort. His wish being father to his thought, it sometimes happens that he mistakes a brief round of perfunctory applause for a genuine recall, and forthwith responds with an unsolicited encore. In much the same way an author may misinterpret the generous praise lavished on his first work as a demand on the part of his readers for the publication of a second one; and I am possibly presumptuous in calling this book a sort of encore more or less justified by the critical handclappings which greeted a volume of similar scope published in 1914[1]. Yet the assurances received from scores of ecclesiastical dignitaries, that the volume in question is really worth while and calculated to do not a little good, may well excuse one's ambition to make another venture in the same field, especially as these assurances have been corroborated by the Catholic press in reviews, of which the following extracts—the first from *America,* the second from the London *Tablet*—are typical: ". . . The kind of book of which you say at once that no one can afford to be without it; certainly no priest or clerical student. A nice combination of humor and common sense and the wisdom of experience. . . ."

[1] "Priestly Practice."

"A thoroughly satisfactory work. Priests in search of a really good book on priestly life and duties, full of sound advice conveyed in an attractive form, should lose no time in procuring a copy of this publication."

Unlike the former work, the present volume contains only two essays that are reprints. "The Priest a Gentleman" and "The Priest and the Press" have appeared in recent issues of the *Ecclesiastical Review,* and are reproduced with the gracious permission of that periodical's reverend editor. The author's purpose in those two chapters, as in all the others, has been to furnish the ordinary workaday cleric with some "spiritual reading" material that is practical and helpful, without being dull, prosy, heavy, or ultra-ascetic.

A word should be added in reference to such criticism of priestly faults as appears here and there in the following pages. I disclaim any pretension whatever to pose as an exemplary and authoritative censor of my clerical brethren, and I ask the reader to believe that there is nothing of the "pride that apes humility" in the statement that the severest strictures in the book are addressed, primarily and principally, to the one priest with whose personality and habits I am most thoroughly conversant,—myself. To be quite candid, while the most censorious paragraphs in the volume were being written, my typewriter's keys seemed to be continually clicking out, with exasperating iteration, the one refrain: *"Me-di-ce, cu-ra te-ip-sum*—Phy-si-cian, heal thy-self."

A. B. O'N., C. S. C.

Feast of the Epiphany, 1916.

PREFACE

(To Third Edition)

THE first edition of this book was disposed of so rapidly that, when the second edition was published, only a few Catholic periodicals had enjoyed the opportunity of pronouncing on the work's merits or defects. Since that time, however, the book has been welcomed in the majority of Catholic editorial rooms in this country, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, South Africa, and India; and to the appreciative reviews and notices which it has received is no doubt due in great measure the present necessity of issuing yet another edition.

Typical instances of the kindly nature of these reviews or notices may prove not uninteresting to new readers of the volume. The London *Catholic Times* says, in part: "This book, intended for the priesthood, is one of the most delightful books of its class that have come under our notice for many a year. It is a gathering of essays and dialogues, varying considerably one from another, and of such keen interest for pastors of souls that when the fifteen chapters have all been carefully perused we rise from the literary banquet with an appetite for more!" Not less interesting, perhaps, is this extract from the late Joyce Kilmer's review of the book in the New York *Times*: "The author's touch is so light and sure, his knowledge so comprehensive, and his style so charming that it is to be hoped that he will further develop some of the themes in this book and put his cross-sections of clerical life into the form of short stories and novels."

Solemnity of St. Joseph, 1920.

I

MINOR DEVOTIONS OF THE PRIESTLY DAY

He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.—*Ecclesiasticus.*

Nothing is too little which relates to man's salvation, nor is there anything too little in which either to please God or to serve Satan.—*Pusey.*

Among our daily works, those which we ought to have most at heart are the spiritual. We should make every effort to perform them well, and let everything else yield to them, when necessity or obedience does not forbid; for they regard God most directly, and do the most to advance us in perfection. If we act otherwise, we draw upon ourselves the malediction fulminated by the Holy Spirit against those who do the work of God negligently.—*St. Vincent de Paul.*

IN view of the insistence with which the prophets and sages, the philosophers and poets, the essayists and publicists, the preachers and teachers of all ages have dwelt on the importance of little things, trifles, details, it is somewhat surprising that so large a number of men in every walk of life have failed to learn the lesson. That the theory of the sages has been verified by practical experience throughout the centuries should prove a sufficient reason, it would seem, why we should give due heed to the apparently little things of every-day life; yet a good many of us rather plume ourselves on the largeness of vision, the broadness of mind, the elevation of spirit which disregards as unworthy of our attention matters that lesser mortals, smaller minds, the "peanut politicians" of the world around us, consider emi-

nently worth while. In this disregard of any other than the big things of life (or the things we look upon as big), we are simply proving that our perspective is false, our sense of proportion erroneous. As Fenelon has wisely remarked, there is no real elevation of mind in a contempt of little things. "It is, on the contrary, from too narrow views that we consider those things of little importance which have, in fact, such extensive consequences."

If there is one domain in which, more than in any other, the power and significance of little things compel attention, it may well be the spiritual, the sphere of the interior life. It is perennially true that

> There is no great and no small
> To the Soul that maketh all;

and no one who has taken to heart the lesson of the widow's mite and the cup of cold water given in the name of Christ can logically flout the import of moral acts however trivial and unimportant these acts may appear to be. Now, in the daily life of the priest there are duties, functions, and employments of varying degrees of importance, one of them (the office) binding *sub gravi,* others *sub levi,* while yet others are merely becoming and commendable rather than in any degree obligatory. In this last-mentioned category may perhaps be placed the greater number of the exemplary cleric's spiritual exercises. Just which of these exercises constitute his major, and which his minor, devotions may be a matter of opinion;

this or that author's division is safe to be characterized by a good many as inexact, and indeed from the nature of the case can hardly be considered as other than arbitrary and purely personal. The majority of priests will probably declare that their major devotions are properly only two: the celebration of daily Mass and the obligatory recitation of their Office. A respectable minority can at need advance forceful arguments for adding to these two a third, daily meditation. With this minority the present writer ranges himself, all the more readily as he has in a former volume treated each of these exercises at some length. The present essay accordingly has to do with daily devotions other than meditation, the Mass, and the Office.

The first of these minor devotions to challenge attention and invite comment is one which at first blush may seem scarcely separable from the second of the major exercises mentioned above, the celebration of the adorable Sacrifice; yet thanksgiving after Mass is, both in theory and in practice, so widely different from the Mass itself that it may well call for comments all its own. That it is a devotion as thoroughly fruitful of beneficent results as it is not infrequently minimized and occasionally neglected, is a truth susceptible of the fullest demonstration, if indeed it be not so obvious as to render demonstration superfluous. That the most precious and most favorable of all moments for strengthening our union with God, as for tendering Him our worship and praise, appeasing Him for our manifold offences, thank-

ing Him for His multitudinous past graces and soliciting new and additional ones from His beneficent hand, is the time when, having completed the adorable Sacrifice, we have Jesus Himself present in our hearts,—this surely admits of no question. The most tepid as readily as the most fervent cleric will admit this much, and on occasion will perhaps discourse most eloquently thereon.

Intellectual apprehension of a truth, however, is one thing; and the effective will to regulate one's conduct in accordance with the obvious corollaries of that truth is quite another. If priests invariably acted in strict conformity with their beliefs, if they uniformly practiced what they preach, there would be little need of annual or biennial sacerdotal retreats, and still less of books like this one. Consistency, unfortunately, is almost as rare a jewel among clerics as it is (in graver matters) among their lay brethren. To be thoroughly consistent about this devotion of which we are speaking, it is scarcely too much to say that our thanksgiving after Mass should endure through the whole forenoon, just as the whole afternoon should be mainly devoted to our preparation for the Mass of the following day. Not a few of the Saints, whose example we are supposed to imitate, so regarded their waking hours; and the more fully we appreciate their viewpoint, the more likely we are to garner abundant sheaves of grace during the precious harvest-time of early morning.

One consideration which affected the thanks-

giving of such of the Saints as were priests appeals to the intelligence and common sense of all of us as strongly perhaps as it did to theirs: we, not less whole-heartedly than they, believe that the Mass is incomparably the greatest, sublimest, most excellent action performable on earth. Theoretically, we admit without any reserve whatever that no other act, function, business, concern, affair, work, task, or duty that can possibly be scheduled for our day possesses anything like the inherent importance of the morning Sacrifice; yet in practice how often do we not apparently regard it as a mere preliminary exercise to be gone through in more or less perfunctory fashion before the real business of the day begins? The special sermon we have to preach, the lecture or poem we have to read, the address we have to deliver before a distinguished auditory, the prominent role we have to play in an ecclesiastical function, the supervision we have to give to the building of church or rectory or school or convent or hall, the financial scheme we have to promote for the good of religion, the social affair we have to organize in the interests of charity, the outing we have genuinely earned and really need,—of how little moment is any of these matters when compared with the tremendous import of our daily Mass; but how many of us can truthfully say that sometimes, if not often, some such relatively trivial affair has not loomed up in our consciousness with fictitious magnitude, has not practically overshadowed and superseded our morning renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary?

It is easy of course to characterize such reflections as the foregoing in terms of depreciation, to qualify them as intense spirituality, visionary piety, "high-brow" enthusiasm too elevated for the practical needs of the every-day priest; but unless the every-day priest acknowledges the truth and justness of this viewpoint of the Saints (however widely his practice may differ from theirs), he is likely to celebrate Mass habitually with insufficient devotion, and especially likely to forfeit the abundant graces attached to a congruous thanksgiving.

To take the ultra-practical cleric on his own ground,—how long a period should be devoted to our thanksgiving? and how should that period be spent? Or, perhaps the question should rather be: How short a time may be allotted to Thanksgiving without incurring the guilt of flagrant irreverence, not to say disedification or scandal? The least rigorous and exacting writers on the subject would seem to consider that about fifteen minutes should be the minimum; and, very exceptional cases apart, that period should surely be brief enough to satisfy either the busiest or the least devout of priests. In good sooth a quarter of an hour affords scarcely more than time enough for the leisurely, attentive recital of the prayers marked in missal and breviary "pro opportunitate sacerdotis dicendae" after the Mass is celebrated. It is worth while perhaps to call the attention of some clerics to the fact that the use of this phrase, "pro opportunitate," before the prayers of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure,

etc., indicates with sufficient clearness that the prayers preceding the phrase, that is, the *Benedicite,* the *Laudate,* and the three collects, are rather obligatory than optional, constituting what may be styled the official thanksgiving which can hardly be omitted without some measure of culpability.

Granting that one's thanksgiving is restricted to a quarter of an hour, had one better recite these optional prayers, or rather pass the time in intimate, heart to heart communion with the Divine Guest present within one's inmost sanctuary? Given any degree of sensible devotion, or even the spirit of genuine recollection, one's personal communing is clearly preferable. The outpouring of one's own heart, either in thanksgiving or in petitioning, is sure to be more earnest, and consequently more probably effective, than the most eloquently phrased prayers of others, even though they be Saints. Sensible devotion, however, as all who profess to lead the interior life know from experience, is not always at command; and genuine self-recollection, free from importunate distractions, does not invariably preoccupy the priestly soul, even immediately after celebrating the holy Sacrifice; and accordingly the optional prayers are often advisable. One's best plan, indeed, is perhaps to make it a practice to recite those prayers habitually, and to supplement them with our own as often as our devotion prompts us to do so.

One consideration that may well determine a

priest to adopt this practice is the fact that these prayers and hymns and aspirations "pro opportunitate dicendae" are richly indulgenced. A considerable number of priests are apparently far more concerned with getting their people to gain indulgences than with the personal task of gaining some for themselves. Neglecting to store their own treasuries with such heavenly currency is a lamentable mistake, the tragic import of which will be fully disclosed only when, in Purgatory, the opportunity of remedying it will have passed forever. Only a very thoughtless or an unduly presumptuous cleric can flatter himself that he does not need as many indulgences, plenary and partial, as he can possibly gain, and a glance at the favors attached to the recitation of the "Gratias tibi ago," the "Transfige, dulcissime Domine Jesu," the "Adoro te devote," the "Anima Christi," the "Suscipe, Domine," the prayers to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and especially the "En ego" and the "Obsecro te" will suffice to convince the ordinary priest that nothing but inexcusable carelessness prevents him from garnering, as often as he celebrates Mass, a veritable harvest of wealth incomparably better worth while than that contained in his office safe, or represented by his account with the local bank.

Of the practice of those priests whose thanksgiving after Mass consists of the recitation of a part of their Office,—Little Hours or Matins and Lauds, but little need be said, and that little can scarcely be other than censorious. There are no doubt occasions in life when that economy of time

and effort which is called "killing two birds with one stone" is commendable; but the period immediately following the celebration of Mass is emphatically not one of them. To begrudge the Divine Guest who has given us His all a few minutes of hospitable entertainment, consecrated to Him alone, is essentially nothing more or less than base, mean ingratitude. 'Tis better of course even to say one's Office than to leave the church altogether within a minute or two of taking off the vestments, but this is so merely because the latter procedure is the greater irreverence. Yet even this practice, hurriedly leaving the sanctuary just as soon as the Mass is completed, is not altogether a phenomenal one in priestly life today, any more than it was in the time of the Father Avila who administered a fittingly stern rebuke to a cleric guilty of this patent irreverence. The priest having left the church immediately after he had finished his Mass, Father Avila sent two ecclesiastics with lighted torches to accompany him. When asked by the priest why they followed him, they replied: "We accompany the Lord of Heaven and earth Whom you carry in your breast." The present-day imitator of that graceless cleric probably has no Father Avila to teach him a much needed lesson, but it is tolerably safe to say that many of his flock, witnessing the utter lack of reverence manifest in his conduct, characterize him in their own minds in terms the reverse of flattering.

Another practice of piety to which the priest should endeavor to devote at least a quarter or

half an hour daily is spiritual reading. At the outset it may be worth while to differentiate the devotional exercise called spiritual reading from what may easily be confounded therewith, the reading of spiritual books. If the mere perusal, for any purpose, of volumes treating of spiritual matters constituted the practice in question, it would scarcely be necessary to comment on it at any length; for there are no priests who do not daily spend over some such volumes, if only the missal and the breviary, more time than has just been suggested for this specific exercise. The reading of Holy Scripture, or of apologetic, catechetical, or ascetical works for the purpose of preparing a sermon, a conference paper, or a magazine article; reading theological treatises with the view of increasing or refreshing our knowledge of sacerdotal science; reading sermon books, the biographies of Saints, or expositions of the contemplative life to the end that we may write adequate reviews thereof,—all this is doubtless an excellent employment of our time, but it does not constitute the spiritual reading which is a distinct exercise of devotion in all religious orders, and among all exemplary clerics, religious or secular.

The real nature of the exercise, and its purpose as well, are admirably indicated in St. Bernard's words: "He who sets himself to read does not so much seek to learn, as to taste the things of God." That we do learn much from spiritual reading is of course indubitable, but this increase of knowledge is incidental; 'tis not the predeter-

mined end and purpose for which the reading is undertaken. To insist at great length on the excellence of this exercise would be in all probability a superfluous task since all graduates of ecclesiastical seminaries have heard that excellence exhaustively dwelt upon in their student days. A mere reminder will convince them that spiritual reading ranks second only to prayer as a means of advancing in virtue and maintaining the congruous standard of sacerdotal piety. "Spiritual reading," says St. Francis de Sales, "is to prayer what oil is to a lamp. Alas! how many lamps are extinguished, morning after morning, for want of oil!" What St. Isadore says of Christians generally is particularly applicable to the clergy: "Whoever wishes to walk with God must often pray and read. When we pray, we speak to God; but when we read, God speaks to us. All our progress in virtue depends on meditation and spiritual reading."

On one notable benefit to be derived from this exercise the Saints and spiritual writers in general do not dilate with their usual copiousness, possibly because the benefit in question is so obvious. It is that spiritual reading stores the memory with such a fund of good thoughts, pious reflections, and devout pictures as proves in time of temptation a valuable offset to the thoughts, reflections, and pictures of an entirely contrary nature deposited in our minds by our multifarious reading of profane books and papers. In other words, and in the parlance of the day, regular spiritual reading, faithfully attended to, may

well prove the effective destroyer of many a mental submarine cruising about with deadly purpose in the war zone of our interior life.

As for the subject matter of this devotional exercise, the books to be read, few priests perhaps need either elaborate instruction or even itemized suggestions. Holy Scripture; Lives of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints; the "Imitation of Christ," the "Introduction to a Devout Life," the "Spiritual Combat," Rodriguez's "Christian Perfection," the "Exercises" of St. Ignatius, etc.; and books dealing specifically with the priestly life and its duties,—are naturally the staple volumes from which the cleric makes a choice when he sets about the performance of this exercise. Many of the foregoing are classics, and a classic never grows old, although not all priests regulate their choice of books in accordance with that truth. Of newer books appropriate for spiritual reading—and Catholic publishers are continually issuing a whole host of them—it is pertinent to remark that for practical purposes the best are those that are best written, those that are readable, not only in the etymological sense that they are "capable of being read," but also in the literary sense that their perusal is exceptionally easy, interesting, or delightful. In other words, a simple, unlabored, clear and flowing literary style is an excellent thing in any book, and not least in one designed for the purpose of spiritual reading by priests.

It may be objected with some specious force that aesthetic pleasure or intellectual gratification

should not be sought for in our exercises of devotion; and, were we all as fervent and as habitually recollected or introspective as we should be, the presence or absence of stylistic excellence in the work we are perusing would no doubt be a negligible consideration. In actual practice, however, that presence or absence very often means our performance, or our neglect, of this particular devotional exercise. Those of us who have most need of spiritual reading are precisely those who are most likely to be so bored by a dull, dry, colorless, heavy presentation of the matter that we abridge our exercise or omit it entirely. Moreover, a book that is really worth reading once is worth from year to year another and yet another perusal; and a volume, to stand that test, must assuredly be free from stiffness, aridity, and what a clerical friend of ours characterizes as "preternatural solemnity, a too common mark of books for clerics, and always repellent."

The fidelity with which a priest accomplishes this minor devotion of his day depends very materially on his having a regular order for the different activities of that day, a well-thought-out and seriously adopted rule of life. Clerics in general, and young priests in particular, can hardly attach undue importance to method and system in the performance of their multifarious official and personal duties. Theoretically, it is of course possible to be too methodical, to observe one's established rule with a rigid formality disproportioned to its importance; but a cursory examination of the average cleric's procedure from day

to day will prove to any judicious observer that for every formalist among priests there are a dozen or a score of others who are the reverse of formal, are immethodical, unsystematic, irregular in their work and prayer and the employment of their leisure. Want of business-like system in the ordering of one's day will often enough seriously interfere with the due accomplishment of even one's graver obligations, and there is little exaggeration in saying that, oftener than not, it will prove fatal to one's minor devotions. Happy the cleric who has not learned this truth from his own sad experience.

A third practice of piety which imperatively calls for priestly adoption is the daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Obviously, it should be what its name implies, a genuine *visit,* an official call on Jesus Christ really present in the tabernacle, a personal communing with Him about matters that intimately concern His glory and our own salvation. Hence, to say one's breviary in the church, or to acquit one's self therein of one's meditation or spiritual reading, while no doubt an excellent practice, is not really, in the received sense of the phrase, "visiting the Blessed Sacrament." Here, once more, the policy of attempting to "kill two birds with one stone" is to be deprecated. The *raison d'être* of this daily exercise of devotion surely needs no explanation. The Real Presence is incontestable evidence of Our Saviour's immeasurable love for us, is convincing proof that His delight is to be with the children of men. That priests above all others should

show Him some love in return, should make it manifest that it is, if not always a sensible delight, at least not a tedious affliction, to be with the Eucharistic God,—this would seem to be demanded by the very nature of the priestly vocation as the only attitude that a consistent cleric can logically assume.

It is no hardship to seek the presence of those we love. It is a joy rather to see, converse with, and confide in them; 'tis a sensible pleasure even to breathe the sympathetic atmosphere that surrounds them. If, accordingly, we priests fail to make our daily visit to Jesus Christ in the tabernacle, must it not be that our love, so often pledged to Him, has grown cold or been slain by our incompatible affection for creatures or for self? Yet, even so, even if we are unmistakably more tepid than fervent, should not our urgent need, if not our gratitude and love, carry us frequently to His feet? Who among us, young or old, is not burdened from day to day with crosses and cares, trials and troubles in the spiritual or temporal order or in both? Pastoral anxieties, financial difficulties, unsuccessful projects, accumulating debts, household vexations, family worries, exhausting labor in the confessional or the office, physical or moral indisposition, insults and affronts and injuries from open enemies, envy and jealousy and calumny and all uncharitableness from hypocritical friends, coldness and indifference and neglect from those we love most fondly,—does not some such burden often leave us ailing in body, heavy at heart, depressed in

spirit? Why not, then, accept the invitation lovingly proffered to us from the tabernacle close at hand: "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Are we weak and fainting from interior struggles with our spiritual enemies, with the world, the flesh, or the devil, or haply with the combined forces of all three? Have the storm-winds of passion lashed us until the waves of temptation threaten to engulf our souls? Why not seek the actual presence of that Divine Master who, now as of old, is ever ready at the cry of His disciples to calm the tempest and bid the waves be still?

To counsel such action as this is clearly not to lay one's self open to the charge of advocating a standard of piety too exalted for even the busiest workaday priest. In reality, as experience abundantly shows, it is a standard not at all too high for the ordinary lay Catholic. Many busy men and women out in the hurly-burly of the active world find, or make, time to pay their daily respects to the Blessed Eucharist. And in truth the practice is only a natural, consistent outcome of a living faith, of a genuine belief that the Divine Occupant of the tabernacle is none other than He who, nineteen hundred years ago, wrought the redemption of mankind,—the identical Man-God, Jesus Christ, who healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and speech to the dumb, who wept with the sister of Lazarus, restored her son to the heart-broken widow of Nain, graciously pardoned the repentant Magdalen, and on the woman taken in adultery passed the merciful

sentence: "Go in peace." To seek in our daily need this most loving of all possible friends is simply an exercise of Catholic common sense, is a practice to which all pastors should excite their flocks by earnest word and especially by habitual example.

Other minor devotions, more or less regular in the daily life of exemplary clerics, are the particular examen, the beads, and the Way of the Cross. Only a word or two can be given to each in the present paper. The examination of conscience, whether made during the day or as a part of night prayer, is a practice which cannot be omitted without serious spiritual loss. The beads, the universal Catholic devotion, are especially congruous in the hands of a priest; and the Stations furnish an excellent opportunity, not only of gaining unnumbered indulgences, but of bewailing the many faults and imperfections that clothe the best of us as a garment. There is surely strong ground for expecting the renewal of fervor on the part of the most tepid priest who daily follows in spirit his thorn-crowned Lord along the road to Golgotha, who cries to that Man of Sorrows:

> Behold me prostrate at Thy feet today,
> I who, alas! "another Christ" should be:
> Ah, Lord, vouchsafe Thy grace whilst I essay
> Thine only function that befitteth me,—
> To bear Thy Cross along this doleful way,
> And weep my sins that built Thy Calvary.

II

THE PRIEST A GENTLEMAN

The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.
—*Thomas Decker* (1641).

To be a gentleman is to be honest, to be gentle, to be generous, to be brave, to be wise, and, possessing all these qualities, to exercise them in the most graceful outward manner.—*Thackeray.*

If you wish to labor with fruitfulness in the conversion of souls, you must pour the balsam of sweetness upon the wine of your zeal, that it may not be too fiery, but mild, soothing, patient, and full of compassion. For the human soul is so constituted that by rigor it becomes harder, but mildness completely softens it.—*St. Francis of Sales.*

ANY one who has ever pursued, either as a business or a hobby, the study of words—their origin, derivation, structure, history, and significance—must have noticed how with the lapse of time many terms once honorable have become debased, and many others once mean or degraded have attained decorum and dignity. Eventually, it may be in the course of a century or two, the original meanings of such words are forgotten, have grown obsolete; but in the interim they are expressive of varying degrees of their native and their acquired signification, and may connote either honor or infamy. A good instance of a word still undergoing the process of

deterioration is the last term in the title of this article. "Perhaps no honorable word in the language," writes an American essayist, "has been more debased than *gentleman*." His statement is of course exaggerated. "Gentleman" is not yet a term of reproach, as is the once unobjectionable "villain," and the essayist himself would probably resent the imputation of being "no gentleman"; but in present-day usage the term is undoubtedly very loosely and at times rather grotesquely employed.

The "gentlemen electors" whom the political candidate addresses so unctuously at a ward meeting in the city's slums scarcely conform to the definition of the sixteenth-century chronicler, Holinshed: "Gentlemen be those whom their race and bloud, or at least their vertues do make noble and knowne." The valet, or body-servant, who is dowered with the title of "gentleman's gentleman" probably claims no special nobility of birth, exceptionally acute sense of honor, or even a plethoric purse. No more, presumably, did the American hack-driver who, something more than half a century ago, asked the visiting Duke of Saxe-Weimar: "Are you the *man* that's going to ride with me, for I'm the *gentleman* that's going to drive?" If a *reductio ad absurdum* be required, it may well be found in the reply of the colored chicken-thief to the magistrate's question: "Are you the defendant in this case?"—"N-no, sah, I'se de gen'leman what stole de chickens." The cheapening of the word has been accelerated rather than retarded dur-

ing the last half-century, and even in 1850 the English laureate sang of his dead friend:

> And thus he bore without abuse
> The grand old name of gentleman,
> Debased by every charlatan,
> And soiled with all ignoble use.

Notwithstanding such ignoble use, however, there are several senses in which the word "gentleman" remains a title of honor and respect. In a democratic country such as ours the historic meaning of the word is of course archaic if not obsolete; but, even on this side of the Atlantic, the following definitions still hold good: "In a loose sense, any man whose breeding, education, occupation, or income raises him above menial service or an ordinary trade," and "A man of good breeding, courtesy, and kindness; hence, a man distinguished for fine sense of honor, strict regard for his obligations, and consideration for the rights and feelings of others." As employed by persons of genuine Christian culture, the word does not necessarily connote either "gentle birth," or wealth, or the abundant leisure which wealth permits. As to this last point, the American idea was rather graphically expressed a few years ago by a New York barrister who, in reply to a transatlantic visitor's comment, "You don't seem to have any gentry in this country," inquired, "Pray, just what do you mean by gentry?"—"Oh, well; gentry, don't you know, are persons who don't do anything themselves, and whose fathers before them never did anything, either."—"In that case,"

said the barrister, "we have lots of gentry in this country; but we don't call them by that name: we call them tramps."

It is hardly necessary to remark that one's being, or not being, a gentleman in the best sense of the word is a matter dependent, like the salvation of one's soul, entirely upon oneself. Were it otherwise, this article's title would be a fallacy and its purpose a futility. No more than other persons have priests any control over the accident of their birth in this or that social grade, in the leisure or the working class, in the lap of luxury or in approximate indigence. A considerable number of us in this country can probably say, with a charming Southern authoress, that we "were born of poor but Irish parents"; and unless we are snobs or cads instead of gentlemen, we feel no call to apologize for the fact. It is worth while remarking that in Newman's celebrated (and often misunderstood) portrait of "the ethical character which the cultivated intellect will form, apart from religious principle," he pretermits any reference to birth, family, ancestors, heredity, or other circumstances over which his "gentleman" has, and can have, no controlling influence. As a classic is always new, it will perhaps be permissible to reproduce once more the oft-quoted passage from his *Idea of a University:*

Hence it is that it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who never inflicts pain. . . . He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and

unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. His benefits may be considered parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature; like an easy chair or a good fire which do their part in dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them. The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast;—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make every one at his ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation and never wearisome. He makes light of favors while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dares not say out. From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice. He is patient, forbearing, and resigned on philosophical

principles; he submits to pain because it is inevitable, to bereavement because it is irreparable, and to death because it is his destiny.

An attractive portrait, the foregoing; and it is scarcely to be wondered at that many a reader of *Characteristics of Newman* or *Extracts from Newman* should mistake it for a picture of what the great Cardinal never intended it to be, and expressly states it is not—the *Christian* gentleman. The lineaments he has so accurately drawn are seen, he tells us, "within the pale of the Church and without it, in holy men and in profligates; they form the beau-ideal of the world; they partly assist and partly distort the development of the Catholic." As for the essential characteristics of Christian, and especially sacerdotal, gentlemanliness, we find them admirably set forth in an etching drawn by a greater than Newman. The gentlemanliness of the true priest is, if not identical with charity, at least so near akin thereto that "it is patient, is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."[1]

There is one fallacy about this matter of being a gentleman which, although not perhaps so prevalent among priests as among their lay brethren, is yet sufficiently common to merit exposure. It is undue insistence on the scriptural truth that "all the beauty of the king's daughter is from

[1] I Cor. 13:4-7.

within," undue straining of Tennyson's "kind hearts are more than coronets," and Burns's "The rank is but the guinea stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that." Obviously what one *is* matters a great deal more than what one appears to be, and a "good heart" is a more precious possession than the most polished manners; but to conclude that appearances therefore count for little or nothing, and that politeness and conventional good form are negligible appurtenances of the priestly character is a capital mistake. Even if we question Paley's dictum, that "manners are minor morals," we can hardly doubt Bartol's, that "good manners and good morals are sworn friends and fast allies." Until human nature becomes radically transformed, the exterior of a man, priest or layman, will count for a great deal, not only in the estimate formed of him by his fellows, but in the extent and force of the influence which he exerts on the world around him. "No doubt," says Mathews, "there are a few men who can look beyond the husk or shell of a fellow-being—his angularities, awkwardness, or eccentricity—to the hidden qualities within; who can discern the diamond however encrusted; but the majority are neither so sharp-eyed nor so tolerant, and judge a person by his appearance and his demeanor more than by his substantial qualities."

It is nothing to the purpose to object that conventional politeness may coexist with a corrupt heart, that Newman's philosophical gentleman may be a profligate, that "one may smile and smile and be a villain;" the fact remains that good

manners are essential to him who would exert the most beneficent possible influence on the circle in which he habitually moves. Moreover, while genuine politeness, it is true, comes from within, from the heart, still, as John Hall shrewdly remarks, "if the forms of politeness are dispensed with, the spirit and the thing itself soon die away." Another consideration worth thinking about is thus phrased by Lord Chesterfield: "A man's own good breeding is the best security against other people's ill manners. It carries along with it a dignity that is respected by the most petulant. Ill-breeding invites and authorizes the familiarity of the most timid. No man ever said a pert thing to the Duke of Marlborough. No man ever said a civil one to Sir Robert Walpole." The reader's memory will readily supply more than a few clerical names which might well replace in this extract that of the courteous Duke, and it is possible that he can also recall a Father X or Father Z who would have made in the same connexion a fairly good substitute for Sir Robert.

Enough of generalizing: let us enter into some details as to the priest's practical exemplification of the fact that he is in very deed and truth a gentleman. If he really deserves the name, his right thereto will be made evident by his dress; by his ordinary deportment; by his deference to social conventions in such matters as table etiquette; by his everyday relations with those of his household and the various classes of his parishioners; by his language in the sacristy, the pulpit, the confessional, in the company of his brother-clerics, and

in his intercourse with his fellow-citizens, Catholic and non-Catholic; and especially by his conduct, not merely in matters of moment, but in those minor ones which, according to Wordsworth, constitute the

> best portion of a good man's life,—
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

To dress as a gentleman is to be inconspicuous in the matter of attire among other gentlemen of one's age and profession. "A gentleman's taste in dress," says Bulwer, "is upon principle the avoidance of all things extravagant. . . . It consists in the quiet simplicity of exquisite neatness." This quality of simplicity, it is needless to remark, is especially congruous to the priestly garb. The cleric whose clothes, in material and style, are much the same as those of his clerical brethren throughout his diocese or his country is probably preserving the just mean between foppishness on the one hand and slovenliness on the other. As between the fop and the sloven there is not perhaps much choice. If the occasional young priest who apparently aspires to be "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" is an incongruous figure, the occasional middle-aged or old one who rather affects threadbare, untidy, slouchy garments is not invariably an edifying spectacle. Even the vow of poverty which religious take does not militate against cleanliness and neatness of apparel; and in the writer's personal experience, the most slovenly, ill-dressed priests he has ever met were so far from being straitened by pov-

erty's vow that they had very respectable bank accounts. To have done with this part of our subject: an essayist who probably wrote for others than clerics has expressed upon it an opinion with which many a priest will agree: "The perfection of dress is in the union of three requisites—in its being comfortable, serviceable, and tasteful."

As for the multiform points of social behavior, the conventional requirements of everyday intercourse with others, the proprieties of conduct which prescriptive usage makes obligatory on all who aspire to pass for gentlemen—good manners, in a word—it is well to remember that, as the author of *Spare Hours* declares: "Etiquette, with all its littlenesses and niceties, is founded upon a central idea of right and wrong." While there may be occasions when the deliberate neglect of such niceties is a manifestation of more genuine politeness than would be their observance, these fine points of etiquette do not, as a rule, conflict with any higher duty or quasi-obligation, and consequently are not to be disregarded. If Father Patrick, taking dinner with one of his parishioners out in the country, conforms to the local custom of drinking his coffee from his saucer and eating his peas with his knife, his kindly motive deprives his action of all boorishness or "bad form"; but he certainly should not acquire the habit of doing so. Nor need he, even on the score of kindliness, imitate the manners of his rural entertainer so closely as to sit down to the table in his shirt sleeves. And so of all the other little acts and courtesies and civilities and observances which

constitute the rites and ceremonies of social life: they may not be infallible indexes of the truest politeness, but at the same time they are so far from being incompatible therewith that the presumption is in favor of those who observe them.

In the matter of his words—in conversation, sermons, instruction to penitents, and every other form of discourse—a prime consideration for the priest to bear in mind is that, whatever else a gentleman may or may not be, he must at any rate show himself a *gentle man.* If there is any one characteristic of "the first true gentleman that ever breathed" which should distinguish him who has so many claims to the appellation *alter Christus,* it is assuredly His loving-kindness that was ever mild, sympathetic, tender, courteous, and merciful. There is abundant material for frequent sacerdotal meditation in this counsel of St. Francis of Sales: "Whoever has the direction of souls should deal with them as God and the angels do—with admonitions, suggestions, entreaties, and 'with all patience and doctrine.' He must knock at the door of the heart like the Spouse and try gently to open it: if he succeeds, he must introduce salvation with gladness; but if a refusal comes, he must bear it patiently. It is thus that our Lord acts. Though He is Master of all, He bears with our long resistance to His lights, and our many rebellions against His inspirations; and even if He be forced to withdraw from those who will not walk in His Way, He does not cease to renew His inspirations and invitations."

This suggested method of procedure is to be recommended not merely in the pulpit, the confessional, and the sick-room where the priest is professedly acting in his pastoral capacity, but in the whole tenor of his normal life. The gentlemanly priest must, in a word, possess and habitually practice a goodly store of what the same St. Francis of Sales calls "the little virtues—humility, patience, meekness, benignity, bearing one another's burdens, condescension, softness of heart, cheerfulness, cordiality, compassion, forgiving injuries, simplicity, and candor." The precepts of true gentlemanliness oblige *semper et pro semper,* and no cleric can afford to give even a shadow of pretext for such criticism as was once passed on an English statesman: "Canning can never be a gentleman for more than three hours at a time." To be courteous abroad and curt at home; genial, affable, and polite to strangers and acquaintances, but gruff, stern, peevish, testy, or surly to house-keeper and servants, assistants, altar-boys, and teachers, is to proclaim oneself a churl in spirit, and a fit subject for the admonition of Ecclesiasticus: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee" (4:35). A moralist who resembled a good many of us in that he did not always practice what he preached, Dr. Johnson, said on a certain occasion: "Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing than to act one; no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down."

Apropos of altar-boys, the wise cleric considers

and treats each of them as a potential priest. He reflects that the apparently mighty distance which separates the pastor of thirty from his server of thirteen will undergo very notable shrinkage in the course of two or three decades, and that the Father Charles of the future, his old-time pastor's full equal in dignity, will probably retain very vivid memories of how that pastor treated the little Charlie of the present. One altar-boy of the late sixties of the last century still joys in recalling the invariable kindness and courtesy of his first pastor, a gentlemanly priest of the old school —Father John Quinn, of St. George, New Brunswick, long ago gone to his reward; and not the least grateful of my memories of that far-off period is of Father John's detaining his altar-boys in the sacristy on the morning of the "great day" of the summer, and giving us fifty cents apiece, with the injunction to be sure to go to the circus and eat plenty of peanuts.

It may perhaps be objected that such a priestly character as has been imperfectly sketched in the foregoing paragraphs is likely to have the defects of his qualities; that after all there are occasions when gentleness ceases to be a virtue; and that even our incomparable Exemplar sternly rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees and "cast out them that bought and sold in the temple." Very true; and moreover St. Paul says, "Be angry and sin not;" but the trouble is that we are all as apt to neglect the second part of the great Apostle's advice as we are to obey its first part, and to attribute to pure priestly zeal the harsh words and occasion-

ally harsher actions which are really ebullitions of sinful ill-temper. The most gentlemanly priest may, nay, at times *must*, display indignation and even inflict pain; but the times are perhaps fewer than some of us like to believe, and in any case there is no valid excuse for such action's being quasi-habitual. Say what he will, the sacerdotal bully or scold—in church or home or elsewhere—can find no justification of his conduct in either the Gospel of our Lord or the Lives of His Saints.

III

FATHER TOM SAYS THE DRY MASS

A RUBRICAL DIALOGUE

Time.—*The third afternoon of the biennial Retreat.*
Place.—*The chapel of Hughes Hall, St. Bartholomew's College.*

PARTICIPANTS

Vicar General Toban, chairman.
Father Conners, diocesan Master of Ceremonies.
Father Thomas Marr, celebrant.
Father O'Brien, rubrical censor.
Father Scherris, }
Father Gormmey, } rectors, irremovable.
Father Harnett, }
Father McTavish, }
Father Launay, } curates, irrepressible.
Father Roberts, }
Other pastors and assistants of the archdiocese of Talis.

Having recited the Veni, Sancte Spiritus, *all take their seats.*

Fr. Toban. As you are all aware, Reverend Fathers, we have assembled for our usual rubrical session. I feel that there is no need of my dwelling at any length on the importance, not to say the necessity, of our reviewing from time to time the ceremonies of low Mass; and most of us know from experience that the "moot," or "rehearsal," or dry Mass furnishes us with an excellent means of detecting the errors into which we are apt to fall in the celebration of the adorable Sacrifice. I shall ask our diocesan Master of Ceremonies

to suggest which one of you be requested to act as celebrant for this afternoon.

Fr. Conners. I have to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that both the celebrant and the rubrical censor, or critic, for the afternoon be elected by the vote of the assembly. Father O'Brien has been speaking to me about the matter, and I like his idea so well that I hope to see it adopted. What that idea is he himself can best tell you.

Fr. O'Brien. My suggestion, Mr. Chairman, is that we depart on this occasion from our old-time custom of appointing as celebrant one of the recently ordained priests, and elect instead one of the senior clergy. As I personally know, a young priest is apt to be a little nervous in celebrating before so large a number of critics and is liable to make a good many more mistakes than is habitual with him. Our seniors are free from such handicap. Let us, for a change, have the dry Mass said by a competent rubricist whose celebrating will emphasize rather what we should do than what we should avoid. We all know how acute, if occasionally severe, a rubrical critic one of those seniors has often shown himself; so, without further ado, I nominate as celebrant Father Tom Marr.

Fr. Roberts. I have much pleasure, Mr. Chairman, in seconding the motion.

Fr. Toban. 'Tis moved and seconded that Father Marr be the celebrant of the dry Mass. Are you ready for the question?

Fr. Marr. Not all of us, Mr. Chairman. I beg to

decline the nomination which my brilliant young friend has proposed. While not, I hope, entirely devoid of humility, I object to playing the rôle of the "horrible example." Be my knowledge of rubrics thorough or the reverse, my motto is: Do as I say, not as I do.

Several. Question! Question!

Fr. Toban. Your modesty, Father Marr, is apparently not going to serve you. Gentlemen, you have heard the motion. Those in favor of it will please say "aye."

The great majority. Aye, aye, aye!

Fr. Toban. Those against the motion will please say "no."

Fr. Marr and several oldsters. No!

Fr. Toban. The "ayes" have it. Father Marr, you are the official celebrant of the dry Mass.

Fr. Harnett. As we have reversed the old style in one respect, Mr. Chairman, perhaps we had better continue the process. I accordingly nominate as rubrical censor Father O'Brien.

Fr. Toban. So excellent a choice, Father Harnett, that if no one objects, I shall save time by declaring your motion carried. . . . I thought not. Father O'Brien, you are the rubrical censor for the afternoon.

Fr. O'Brien. I fear you have provided for Father Tom's being more sinned against than sinning; but, as the critic's duties this afternoon are likely to be light, I accept. To begin with, I suggest that we divide the Mass into three periods, terminating respectively with the Creed, the Consecration and the last

Gospel. The celebrant will proceed without interruption throughout each period and the comments of the censor will be made only at the end of such period. This plan will, I think, economize time and moreover lessen the fatigue of the celebrant who may sit during the criticism. I should like to hear the opinion of Father Conners on this modification of our usual procedure.

Fr. Conners. I think it an admirable plan. In any case, it will do no harm to try it for once. What do *you* think of it, Mr. Chairman?

Fr. Toban. Quite as you do; by all means let us give it a trial.

Fr. O'Brien. In that case, Father Marr, I shall ask you to accompany me to the sacristy, behind the altar there, to prepare to say the Mass of St. Bartholomew, and to proceed with the Mass up to the conclusion of the Creed.

[*Exeunt Frs. Marr and O'Brien.*

Fr. Gormmey (*sotto voce* to Fr. Harnett). Poor Tom! He's in for it! That young O'Brien is too smooth; he means mischief, or I lose my guess.

Fr. Harnett. Yes; I'm afraid I made a mistake in nominating him as censor.

Fr. Launay (aside to Fr. McTavish). Has O'Brien been specializing on the rubrics recently?

Fr. McTavish. As old Father Murphy said about saying Mass in green on St. Patrick's Day, just you watch him.

[*Enter* Father Marr, *vested,* and Father O'Brien. *The latter beckons to* Father Rob-

erts, *to act as server and the Mass begins. As it proceeds, the censor is seen to jot down occasional notes in a memorandum book*: Father Conners *raised his eyebrows at times; and the Vicar General shakes his head more than once. All follow the movements of the celebrant with marked attention until the end of the Creed.*

Fr. O'Brien. Now, Father Marr, if you will kindly take a seat, we shall discuss the rubrics of this first period. (*The celebrant descends and sits down.*) At the outset I wish to retract a statement which I made in good faith in our preliminary talk,—that our senior clerics would not be handicapped by nervousness. Nothing else than nervousness, I feel sure, can account for the numerous points in which our worthy celebrant has departed from the *ritum, modum, ac normam* prescribed by the Bull prefixed to the missal of Pius V. For instance, 'twas his nervousness, no doubt, that made him forget to prepare the missal before leaving the sacristy.

Fr. Marr. Not at all. I found the Mass, as I always do, before descending to begin the *Judica me, Deus.* The rubrics distinctly say this should be done.

Fr. O'Brien. Quite so; but a previous rubric just as distinctly states that, in the sacristy, before vesting, the priest "takes the missal, finds out and looks over the Mass to be said and the prayers prescribed; and arranges the registers of the missal in their proper places, so as to avoid mistakes or loss of time at the altar."

Fr. Toban. An excellent reason for a wise prescription. I have seen priests spend fully six or seven minutes hunting up, at the altar, the Mass that should have been found before they left the sacristy. Such delay is an annoyance and a disedification to the faithful.

Fr. Scherris. But, after all, the rubric cited by the censor is rather directive than preceptive,—is it not?

Fr. O'Brien. Neither more directive nor less preceptive than that which prescribes the washing of the hands before vesting. The one rubric is on all fours with the other. To be consistent one should conform to both, or neither. To get on: you probably noticed that our celebrant carried his handkerchief and reading-glasses on the Burse over the Chalice. That is of course forbidden: not even the key of the tabernacle may be placed there. Apropos of carrying the Chalice, you were doubtless surprised to see that while Father Marr correctly held its knob with his left hand, his right arm was swinging. The rubrics prescribe that the right hand be placed upon the Burse, quite naturally to prevent the tipping over of Burse, Veil, and Paten. I have noted in my memorandum here that the celebrant's inclinations or reverences call for comment. If Father Marr will pardon me for saying so, I should like to state that he is neither so long-armed nor so broad-shouldered as he evidently thinks he is. His inclinations or bows, on arriving at the altar, before begin-

ning the *Judica me, Deus,* during the *Confiteor,* and throughout the *Munda cor meum* were moderate, rather than profound as they should have been. To bow profoundly, in the rubrical sense, is to bend so low that one can touch the knees with one's hands, or even, according to some rubricists, with crossed hands. Father Marr's hands, had he lowered them, would not have come within six or eight inches of his knees. So, too, with his extending his hands. "The hands, when extended, should not be farther apart or nearer together than the width of the shoulders; when elevated they should not be raised higher than the shoulders; and in both positions they should be so held that the palms shall face each other." Our celebrant's hands, as you have seen, were both farther apart than the breadth of his shoulders and raised to the height of his ears, to say nothing of the fact that his palms faced the altar rather than each other.

Fr. Launay. You have said nothing, Mr. Censor, of the celebrant's having come out to the altar by the Epistle, instead of the Gospel side. Are we to infer that your silence on that point means you think him right?

Fr. O'Brien. Not necessarily. It means rather that I don't think him indisputably wrong, as he was on the points to which I have called your attention. I have purposely avoided mentioning controverted matters, as they usually take up a good deal of time, and leave

us just about where we are at the start. Personally, for instance, I think Father Marr should have approached the altar from the Gospel side; but, as he could at need quote authority for his action, I said nothing.

Fr. Marr. Thereby showing your discretion. Wapelhorst declares that when the sacristy is directly behind the altar, the latter should be approached from the Epistle side.

Fr. O'Brien. Not quite accurate, Father Marr. Wapelhorst *used* to say that, but in his later editions he declares the opposite. Zualdi and O'Callaghan, however, in "The Sacred Ceremonies of Low Mass" (seventh edition, 1909), do uphold your contention, as does also Father Doyle, S. J., in his excellent little brochure, "Synopsis of the Rubrics and Ceremonies of Holy Mass," published as late as 1914. To mention something else for which, so far as I am aware, you can cite the authority of no rubricist, you began the *Kyrie Eleison* before you reached the middle of the altar. That's a very common fault which rubricists very commonly condemn.

Fr. Toban. Pardon me, Father O'Brien, but I've been waiting for your comment on the height at which the celebrant carried the Chalice in coming to the altar.

Fr. O'Brien. Rather stupid of me not to have mentioned that he carried it altogether too low. Martinucci mentions the point as one about which mistakes are often made. Some

carry the Chalice, as our celebrant has done, in front of the waist; others in front of the shoulders. The proper position for it is, of course, in front of the breast.

Fr. Scherris. Five or six inches lower or higher than the breast would not, I suppose, constitute a grievous offense.

Fr. O'Brien. Not in itself; but I need not tell so sound a theologian as the last speaker that the frame of mind indicated by habitual minimizing of the binding force of the rubrics, the *quasi*-contempt of the multifarious details of the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice, and the tendency to ridicule those who carefully observe even the most minute prescriptions laid down for its celebration, *does* constitute an offense considerably more grievous than a good priest should like to have on his conscience. Even as regards particular points, such as the one we have been speaking of, the carrying of the Chalice, it is well to remember the declaration of the Roman Synod, in 1725, that these rites of the Mass "in minimis etiam *sine peccato* negligi, omitti, aut mutari haud possunt."

Fr. McTavish (aside to Fr. Roberts). What did I tell you? I guess we'll have no further remarks from Scherris.

Fr. O'Brien. To economize time, I'm afraid we shall have to be content with the briefest mention of the other points I have noted in my memorandum. In kissing the altar, Father Marr neglected to place his hands outside the

corporal; he twisted his body and turned his neck; and, moreover, he kissed it rather at the side than in the centre. All these defects arose from his standing too close to the altar, instead of drawing back from it a little before bowing to give the kiss. Another matter which calls for a word of comment: the celebrant's different tones of voice. We all know that the rubrics prescribe three separate tones: the clear, audible by those at some distance from the altar—by all of us, I should think, in a chapel no larger than this one; the moderate, that can be heard by the server and those quite near the altar; and the low or secret, audible only to the celebrant himself. Now, the portion of the Mass through which we have gone rarely calls for any other than the first tone, the clear; yet Father Marr, in his reading of the *Gloria* and the *Credo,* has given us all three. As you cannot have failed to notice, his voice repeatedly ran the gamut from a high and distinct tone, through a gradually sinking one, to a faint and inaudible murmur. Not even Father Roberts, the server, could distinguish, I venture to say, more than two-thirds the words in either the *Gloria* or the Symbol.

Fr. Roberts. Hardly that many; but I did distinctly hear him introduce a superfluous *Et* when repeating the antiphon at the end of the psalm *Judica me, Deus,—Et introibo,* instead of *Introibo.*

Fr. O'Brien. The point is well taken; the *Et* was

wrong. And now, unless some one has further remarks to make, perhaps we may ask Father Marr to continue the Mass.

[*The celebrant ascends the altar, says the Dominus vobiscum and proceeds until the consecration of the Chalice is completed, when he again takes his seat.*]

Fr. Toban. If you will permit me, Mr. Censor, I should like to suggest that you limit your criticism of this second period to the more notable errors or blunders of the celebrant, assuming that he has made any. While I find this session extremely interesting, as I am sure do all the Reverend Fathers, I must not forget that we have a conference by the retreat-master at five o'clock.

Fr. O'Brien. Very well, Mr. Chairman. I shall endeavor to be as brief as possible. To begin with, our celebrant, while pouring the wine and water into the Chalice, held the Purificator with the thumb of his left hand on the cup of the Chalice, instead of on its knob. At the Offertory, he raised both the Paten and the Chalice too high; the former should not be lifted higher than the breast, and the top of the latter should not be above the eyes. In making the sign of the cross with the Chalice he made it pass over the Host, which is forbidden, and his crosses, made with both Paten and Chalice, were hardly of the prescribed length.

Fr. McTavish. What *is* that length, may I ask?

Fr. O'Brien. O'Callaghan says the sign should be

made "in straight and equal lines, about nine inches long," and Doyle, a little more definitely, says: "Form sign of cross, each arm nine inches long." The arms of our celebrant's crosses to which I have referred were scarcely four inches in length. At the *Lavabo* Father Marr washed, I noticed, two or three fingers of each hand, whereas the rubrics call for the washing of only the tips of the thumb and forefinger of each.

Fr. Roberts. I don't know whether you remarked it, Mr. Censor, but the celebrant, after saying the *Orate, fratres,* answered *Amen* before I had half finished the *Suscipiat Dominus.* Is that right?

Fr. O'Brien. Decidedly not; nor should the celebrant have said the *Orate, fratres,* in the same clear tone in which he said the *Dominus vobiscum.* Those two words, like the *Sanctus* to *excelsis* inclusively, the three words *Nobis quoque peccatoribus,* and the four words *Domine, non sum dignus* should be said in the moderate tone audible to those only who are near the altar.

Fr. Launay. Apropos of tones, what is to be said of the practice some priests have of pronouncing the words of the consecration in a loud whisper audible a good distance from the altar?

Fr. O'Brien. It is condemnable, and, so far as I know, is actually condemned by all rubricists of repute. You are probably aware that St. Alphonsus says it would be a mortal sin to pro-

nounce them so loud as to be heard at a distance of forty paces or yards from the altar. Father Marr's tone at the Consecration was properly secret; but his inclinations during that part of the Canon left something to be desired. Even those rubricists who think that an inclination of the head may accompany the genuflections made from the Consecration to Communion, do not authorize the simultaneous bending of the shoulders. It is not quite certain, I think, that the expressions "genuflexus Sacramentum adorat," "genuflexus eum adorat," "genuflexus sanguinem reverenter adorat" mean even that the head should be bowed: they may well refer merely to one's mental attitude, advising that our genuflections to the Blessed Sacrament actually before us on the altar be made with greater gravity and devotion, without prescribing our departing from the general rule, which is that, as the major reverence includes the minor, the genuflection is made without any inclination of the head or body. In any case, the ungraceful stooping of both head and shoulders while one is genuflecting is certainly not enjoined by the rubrics.

Fr. Launay. While we are on the subject of inclinations I should like to know whether the celebrant bowed profoundly, or moderately, while he was saying the *Te igitur.*

Fr. O'Brien. Only moderately, though he should have bowed profoundly.

Fr. Scherris. Excuse me, but in that case how could he have read the prayer?

Fr. O'Brien. He is not supposed to read it. The rubrics take it for granted that he knows it by heart. These, Mr. Chairman, are the principal comments which seem to be called for by the celebrant's performance of the second portion of the Mass, although it is quite possible that I have omitted some of more importance than those I have made. I shall be glad to have any such omissions supplied by yourself, Father Conners, or any other priest present.

Fr. Toban. No, I have nothing to add in the matter of criticism. Have you, Father Conners?

Fr. Conners. Just a word on one departure from the rubrics which in my experience I have found as common as it is ungraceful, not to say irreverent. I noticed that, when leaving the middle of the altar, after offering the Host, to go to the Epistle side for the purpose of putting the wine and water into the Chalice, the celebrant at once took up the Chalice and proceeded to wipe it with the Purificator while moving over to the Epistle corner. That is incorrect. The rubrics expressly state that he should go to the Epistle corner with his hands joined, and, only when there, take the Chalice and wipe it. It may be well to add that some rubricists advise the holding of the Chalice at its cup rather than its knob while it is being wiped, in order to avoid straining or breaking it.

Fr. Toban. Any further remarks? No? Then Father Marr may proceed to finish the Mass.

[*The celebrant ascends the altar, begins at the* Unde et memores *and continues until, at the end of the last Gospel, he takes the Chalice and descends to the foot of the altar and kneels.*]

Fr. O'Brien. That will do, Father Marr; we will dispense with the prayers. Father Roberts, kindly take the Chalice into the sacristy. (*Father Roberts does so and Father Marr sits down.*) To take up the last point first, let me say that, while it is possibly authorized, or at least condoned, by a few rubricists, the custom of saying the prayers after Mass with the Chalice in one's hands is not a laudable one. Any decisions on the matter, so far as I know, declare that these prayers should be said with the hands joined, and that prescription presupposes that the Chalice is left on the altar until the conclusion of the prayers.

Fr. Conners. Quite right, Mr. Censor, it *should* be left there. The contrary practice is at most tolerated, not approved.

Fr. Gormmey. Granting that the Chalice should be left on the altar, may one say those prayers on the top step, or should they be said on the lowest one?

Fr. O'Brien. In that respect, I believe that practice differs. Personally, I prefer the lowest step; although the matter is probably *ad libitum.* To go back to the beginning of this third period, the celebrant's inclination during the *Supplices te rogamus* was moderate instead of profound; and while signing himself with the

sign of the cross at *omni benedictione, etc.*, he kept his left hand on the Corporal instead of placing it under his breast. At the conclusion of the *Memento* for the dead he did not bow his head while saying *Per eumdem Christum, etc.*

Fr. Scherris. And why should he? The Holy Name does not appear in that conclusion.

Fr. O'Brien. No, but the rubrics distinctly prescribe the bowing, nevertheless. Several authors call attention to the fact that this is the only exception of the kind in the entire Mass. To continue: our celebrant extended his hands at the *Praeceptis salutaribus* instead of keeping them joined until he began the *Pater* proper. At the *Agnus Dei* he—

Fr. McTavish. Pardon me, Mr. Censor, but I noticed that when he had put the Paten under the Host, Father Marr did not lean the Paten on the foot of the Chalice, as I was taught to do. Was he correct?

Fr. O'Brien. I should not care to say he was not. While several authors—among others, Zualdi, Devine, and Doyle—prescribe such leaning, Martinucci says nothing about it, and Wapelhorst declares that the Paten may either be leaned on the foot of the Chalice, or placed a little distance from the center on the Epistle side. As I was about to remark, at the *Agnus Dei* the celebrant's inclination was slight rather than moderate; that is, he bowed only his head instead of head and shoulders. The same moderate inclination is prescribed during the

recitation of the three prayers before communion.

Fr. Harnett. But does not a moderate inclination, such a bow as permits one to see one's toes, make it rather awkward to read those prayers on the altar card?

Fr. O'Brien. Once again, they are not supposed to be read, but recited.

Fr. Harnett. What's that? Where, may I ask, do you find any authority for the statement that those three somewhat long prayers should be known by heart?

Fr. O'Brien. In the Missal itself. The *Ritus celebrandi Missam* says that they are to be recited *oculis ad Sacramentum intentis,* with eyes fixed on the Sacred Host; and, obviously, one can't look at the Host and at the altar-card at the same time. Needless to say, any prayers to be said while one is profoundly inclined *must* be known by heart.

Fr. Launay. The most profound bow made by the celebrant during the whole Mass was at the *Placeat Tibi* before giving the blessing; and, if I remember well, Wapelhorst says that the prayer should be said with only the head inclined.

Fr. O'Brien. Wapelhorst therein agrees with the Ritus *celebrandi,* but the *Ordo Missae* says *se inclinat* which seems to imply a moderate inclination of the body. O'Callaghan and Doyle prescribe this moderate inclination; Martinucci says to bow the head; and the only author, so far as I know, that justifies Father Marr's

profound bow is Devine, in his "Ordinary of the Mass."

Fr. McTavish. Does *any* author justify genuflecting, during the last Gospel, otherwise than towards the corner of the altar?

Fr. O'Brien. None of whom I have any knowledge. And now, as I see the Reverend Chairman is consulting his watch, I presume we must bring this session to a close. Before doing so, let me say that my remarking the celebrant's multitudinous sins against the rubrics has not blinded me to the good points in his celebration. In the dignity of his demeanor, the gravity of his movements, the control of his eyes, and the unhurried style of his reading, he has given us all, and especially us younger priests, an object lesson that we should turn to our profit. Many as undoubtedly were his rubrical mistakes, his manner of celebrating would have impressed rather than disedified an ordinary congregation.

Fr. Toban. While your tribute to Father Marr is generous and quite worthy of you, Mr. Censor, it holds a latent fallacy which I don't think it well to leave unexposed. Edifying the faithful is doubtless a good thing, but observing the rubrics is a better. I have no doubt that, if Father Marr prostrated himself during the *Confiteor* or said the *Credo* on his knees with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, there would not be wanting parishioners to say: "Glory be to God, but isn't himself the pious man!" What it behooves us all

to remember is that, just as not all who say "Lord, Lord!" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of the Father; so not all who edify the faithful by their reverent exterior and their deliberation while at the altar, but those only who know and carry out every detail of the rubrics, celebrate Mass worthily. We shall now say the *Sub tuum.*

IV

THE PRIEST AND THE PRESS

This country is not priest-ridden, but press-ridden.—*Longfellow.*

The Catholic clergy hold the responsibility of the success of everything Catholic. They must be behind every work or movement in the Church, else it is doomed to failure.—*The Rev. C. F. Thomas, S. T. L.*

To publish Catholic Journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature.—*Pope Pius X.*

THE subject of this paper is so hackneyed, and the average reader of this book has himself written and said, or at least read and heard, so much about it, that it is perhaps somewhat rash to attempt any further discussion of it, even if one hopes to exemplify in its treatment the rule advocated by Benedict XV. in his first Encyclical: "Old things, but in a new way." Yet, trite as are many, not to say most, of the considerations that proffer themselves to a writer on the press in general, or the Catholic paper in particular, the subject is one of such perennial importance that in reality no more apology should be needed for another exposition of some of its phases than is needed by a preacher for another sermon on the annually recurring Gospel of the Sunday. It is a matter as to which one may well apply the revised version of an old proverb: "You should

not only strike the iron while 'tis hot, but should keep on striking the cold iron till it gets hot."

As an advisable preliminary to the present writer's statement of his views on the correlative duties of the clergy and the press, he may be pardoned for showing the credentials which will perhaps acquit him of impertinence in discussing the question at all. For the past quarter of a century, then, I have been connected, either as editorial contributor or as associate-editor, with a Catholic weekly. During the greater portion of that period, part of my daily work has been to examine carefully successive issues of the majority of Catholic periodicals published throughout the English-speaking world, and a more limited number of French papers and magazines as well. The convictions formed as a result of that experience may or may not be correct, but they are tolerably definite and settled. In any case, they *are* convictions, strong beliefs held on satisfactory evidence, not mere opinions loosely entertained and readily changed, still less momentary impressions as variable as the lights and shadows that play over a summer lake.

In its widest, most general sense, "the press" denotes the sum total of printed literature; and even in its most specific sense, that in which it is applied to newspapers and other periodical publications, it is a multifarious entity subject to almost indefinite classification. For the purposes of the present article a brief division will be sufficient. The press with which the ordinary priest in this country has, or may have, to do comprises

newspapers and periodicals that are: professedly anti-Catholic; non-Catholic, but religious; secular and ultra-sensational—"yellow journals"; secular and reputable; and Catholic. With regard to each of these divisions it behooves the priest, both in his personal and his pastoral capacity, to take a definite stand, to determine just what attitude is his congruous one, and to carry out in practice the line of conduct which in theory he recognizes as right and proper.

As far as the first two or three of these categories are concerned, his duty is fairly obvious. It is scarcely too much to say that the less a Catholic, clerical or lay, has to do with such papers, the better. Concerning anti-Catholic and sectarian periodicals, indeed, one's congruous attitude is unmistakably clear. Such publications are prohibited by the Index, which lays its ban upon "those newspapers and periodicals which, not only now and then, but regularly and of set purpose, attack religion and morality, or propagate anti-Catholic views." That last clause would seem to include not only such papers as the *Menace,* the *Peril,* etc., but the sectarian weeklies which professedly defend heresies and habitually contain matter derogatory to the Mass, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints.

Now, the fact that these divisions of the press are "on the Index" imposes on the pastor two obligations. In the first place, he himself, as a rule, and without the due authorization of his ecclesiastical superiors must not read them; in the second, he must instruct his people that the

reading of them is sinful, and, according to the theologians, mortally so. It may be well in this connexion to remind the clergy, and more especially the younger portion thereof, that the brief of Leo XIII, prefixed to the edition of the Index revised by his authority, states that it is binding "on all the faithful of the universe, regardless of race or language, nationality or country, *education, learning or station in life.*" It is to be feared that there is a tendency among the younger priests of this country to consider that their ordination exempted them *ipso facto* from obedience to the prescriptions of the Index; and we have even heard clerics flippantly assert that "such legislation was never meant to apply in this country, anyway." That is a serious mistake, and may easily be productive of disastrous consequences to even the most brilliant ecclesiastic. The common sense of the matter is well set forth in this paragraph from the little treatise of Father Betten, S.J.:

Suppose a person were so well grounded in faith and virtue, so thoroughly versed in theology, philosophy, and the natural sciences that the reading of books, e. g. on Christian Science or the works of Voltaire, would not harm him. The Index prohibits these books; would he whom they could not harm be allowed to read them? As we put the case, he would not, by reading them, commit the sin of seriously endangering his soul. Yet he would sin by disregarding a positive law of the Church. These laws are like the precautionary measures taken by the civil authorities in times of epidemic; if they are to have the desired ef-

fect, they must be observed by all. When the community is under quarantine, those who declare themselves free from the disease must observe the regulations as well as the rest.[1]

Exceptional cases apart, then, the reading of anti-Catholic and of sectarian periodicals is a sin for any Catholic, priest or layman, who has not previously obtained due permission to read them from the ordinary or other properly delegated ecclesiastical authority. The average pastor may do well to take account of this truth himself, and, as occasion serves, to expound it to his people. In his own case, at least, ignorance of the law which every man is presumed to know does not afford excuse.

As for the line of action to be taken by a pastor whose parish is being flooded with copies of disreputable anti-Catholic papers, there will naturally be a difference of opinion concerning the best methods to be pursued. Perhaps the safest course for the individual priest to follow is to discuss the whole question with his ordinary, explaining the effects of this vile propaganda on his particular flock, and then adopt the course which the bishop advises as the most expedient. Diversity of circumstances will of course necessitate, or at least justify, variety of action; but in general it may be said that the "silent contempt" plan of treating these manifestations of bigotry is obsolescent, and ought to be obsolete. There should surely be sufficient dynamic force

[1] *The Roman Index of Forbidden Books*, p. 18.

resident in the Catholic body of this country to prevent the dissemination of these blasphemous and calumniously vituperative periodicals through the agency of the U. S. mails, and there appears to be no good reason why the clergy should not use their influence in bringing about so desirable a consummation.

The periodicals which we have classed as secular and ultra-sensational deserve from the priest much the same treatment as those forbidden by the Index. Some of these yellow journals indeed constructively come under the same prohibition as forbidden books; and not a few of them are condemned, independently of any positive decree of authority, by the natural law which obliges us to guard our souls from serious danger. No spiritual guide who is also a sane observer of the times needs to be told that to peruse habitually, or even occasionally, certain popular newspapers is deliberately to seek the occasion of sin. It goes without saying that priests should eschew such perusal in their own case and protest against it in the case of their people.

As for reputable secular papers, a wide-awake, energetic pastor may well utilize them in furthering both his own personal work and the larger interests of the Church. The editors of such papers will, as a rule, welcome brief letters or pithy communications in which priests well known to their readers give the Catholic view of questions of the moment, or correct the false impressions produced by some quoted lecturer or preacher. In most of our cities and towns the

Catholic priest is very generally recognized as a citizen of worth and standing, and it depends largely upon himself whether his beneficent influence be practically restricted to his own flock, or through the local press, judiciously used as the occasion proffers, be extended to his fellow-citizens generally. Readers of the New York *Sun* will readily recall interesting communications contributed to that metropolitan journal by the late Dr. McSweeny, Dr. Brann, Father Shanley, and other priests; and here is a concrete instance of the action I have in mind as I find it in a secular daily less noted than the *Sun,* published in a city much smaller than New York. The daily reported a sermon delivered, the previous evening, in one of the city's Protestant churches. One of the preacher's statements was: ". . . These utterances deal heavy blows at that church which has claimed for Mary what she has never claimed for herself; for if, as Catholicism suggests, Mary be equal with, if not superior to, the Deity. . . ." In the next issue of the paper appeared a brief letter from a priest, in which, after quoting the foregoing assertion, he went on to say:

The minister who made this outrageous statement is possibly in good faith. It must indeed be charitably presumed that he has not wittingly borne false witness against his neighbors; but all the same he enunciated a monstrous untruth. Had he taken the preliminary trouble to find out what *is* the Catholic doctrine about the honor given to the Blessed Virgin, he would have discovered, in so easily attainable a book as *Catholic Belief,* this categorical denial of his declaration: "Catholics

do not believe that the Blessed Virgin is in any way equal or even comparable to God, for she, being a creature, although the most highly favored, is infinitely less than God." Had he reflected for a moment on the import of the commonest Catholic prayer to the Blessed Virgin, the "Hail Mary," he could not but have recognized that his statement was not only untrue but utterly absurd. "Holy Mary, Mother of God," pleads the Catholic, "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Why ask her to pray for us, if we consider her "equal with, if not superior to, the Deity?"

Such apologetic work as this, a mission in miniature to non-Catholics, is often possible, and, in our day especially, is surely worth while doing. Of other relations which the priest may well have with reputable secular newspapers, much might be said, but there is probably no necessity of dwelling upon them here.

To come to the last of our divisions of "the press," Catholic papers and magazines: these, above all, merit the serious consideration and the many-sided active support of the clergy, and it is with respect to such periodicals that the average priest of the land is perhaps doing something less than his full duty. Unfortunately, indeed, there are clerics not a few who seem to imagine that their principal, if not their sole, obligation with regard to the Catholic press is to speak of it disparagingly, to emphasize its alleged inferiority to its non-Catholic competitors, and to harp continually on its supposed limitations and consequent inefficiency. In the expressive, if not very ele-

gant, vernacular of the man in the street, altogether too many priests in this country are knockers rather than boosters of our Catholic papers, censorious critics, rather than generous helpers. Not that censorious criticism is always out of place, either concerning occasional issues of normally excellent periodicals, or concerning the habitual policy of some few self-styled Catholic journals; but the clerical attitude of passive indifference, or more or less active opposition, to the Catholic press generally is clearly wrong and indefensible.

To have done at once with exceptional cases, let it be admitted that the editor of the *Ecclesiastical Review* has as much reason now as he had some years ago for declaring: "Of the large number of Catholic exchanges received by us, there are several that we could not allow to be read by respectable non-Catholics or young persons, from a legitimate fear of injuring the Catholic name or weakening the Catholic faith." In conversation with an American archbishop a year or two ago, the present writer mentioned among Catholic journals a paper published in the prelate's own city and edited by one of his own priests, and was not a little edified at the archbishop's peremptory comment: "That is *not* a Catholic paper." Only a few weeks ago I heard a well known cleric, the sanity of whose judgment is very generally recognized, state his deliberate opinion that a certain famous (or notorious) American weekly has done more in the past few decades to lessen reverence for the hierarchy, to undermine ecclesiastical au-

thority, and wantonly to antagonize respectable non-Catholics than any other one agency in the country. Yet the editor of the weekly in question is a priest, and he doubtless fondly imagines that his is a model Catholic paper.

Now, while it is no doubt deplorable that there should be even two or three so-called Catholic papers utterly unworthy of that name and of Catholic support, there is no use in exaggerating the evil or in making the vices of the exceptional few a pretext for ignoring the virtues of the overwhelming majority. As a rule, our papers stand fairly well what the Rev. Dr. Heuser once stated to be the essential test of a Catholic journal: "orthodoxy in matters of faith, an elevated and elevating manner of treating all questions that have a moral aspect, and loyalty to legitimate authority in Church and State." With reasonable completeness they supply what Bishop Hedley declares should make up the contents of a really Catholic paper: "the true statement of all public information affecting the Church and the Catholic religion; the Catholic version of the constantly recurring 'scandals,' as they are called, and of stories tending to injure Catholicism; the prompt contradiction and refutation of lies and slanders; comments of the right sort on the doings of politicians and on current history and crime; sound and religious views on matters social, industrial, and municipal; and the constant prominence of distinctively Catholic topics. Besides this, we should have general literature and art treated with wisdom and with due re-

gard to the morality of the Gospel; and more serious matters, such as Holy Scripture and the relations between faith and science, would be handled with reverence and knowledge."

In stating that our papers are fairly efficient with respect to these major requirements of true Catholic journalism, I have no desire to minimize the defects in minor matters—mechanical make-up, varied attractiveness, topical timeliness, well-ordered departments, judicious selection of quoted matter, readableness, etc., etc., which one hears so often commented upon by clerical censors of diocesan, metropolitan, or cosmopolitan periodicals. These defects exist, although not perhaps in such superabundance as the hypercritical censor endeavors to make out; and they would not in all probability be materially lessened even if the present editors yielded up their chairs to their critics. While the average Catholic paper in this country may not be an exemplar of perfect journalism, it is probably conducted with considerably more ability than would, or could, be displayed in the editorial sanctum by the average priest who condemns it as "no good."

Such condemnation is perhaps at bottom merely an effort to tranquilize the priestly conscience which protests against sacerdotal neglect of duty in the matter of worthily supporting the Catholic press. That there *is* such a duty devolving upon priests, and especially upon pastors, is a fact admitting of no question whatever. Unless bishops, provincial synods, Catholic congresses, Roman Congregations, and Sovereign

Pontiffs have been talking at random and counseling unadvisedly for the past half-century, Catholic priests and Catholic people under modern conditions are bound in conscience to foster Catholic journalism. No thoughtful ecclesiastic will contradict the statement that the obligation presses primarily upon the clergy rather than the laity, if for no other reason than this, that the specific business of the clergy is the extension of God's work and the furtherance of those religious ends which the apostolate of the press has in view. It would be easy, were it necessary, to fill page upon page of this volume with wise words from the greatest churchmen of the age on a clerical duty which Leo XIII thus formulated: "Let the clergy foster these (Catholic) journals with all zeal, and aid them with their learning; and wherever they find men truly Catholic who are active in this work, let them give to these most generous support and favor."

The explanation of the all too common failure of American clerics to follow this advice is not any doubt of its abstract justice and expediency, but the thoroughly human, if reprehensible, tendency to shirk, as individuals, obligations which are admittedly incumbent upon us as a body. The paramount need of the times, so far as our Catholic press is concerned, is perhaps the vivid realization by the individual priest—the concrete Father John, or Tom, or Maurice, who is reading these pages—that to him personally is addressed this other papal utterance: "In vain will you build churches, give missions, found schools—all your

efforts will be futile if you are not able to wield the defensive and offensive weapon of a loyal and sincere Catholic press;" and that for all practical purposes "Catholic press" means for him, primarily, the duly authorized and accredited paper of his diocese or archdiocese. His possible contention that the success or failure, the flourishing growth or gradual decadence, the living or dying of the journal in question is no concern of his, none of his business, is a gross fallacy, the very reverse of the truth. The maintenance of an organ for the diffusion and the defense of the Catholic truth, as for the promotion of Catholic interests generally, emphatically *is* in some degree his business, a business which of course he is free to neglect but not without forfeiting his claim to the title of an enlightened, zealous, or even thoroughly honest priest of God.

Given his willingness fully to acquit himself of his duty to the home paper which has the first claim upon him and his parishioners, how can he accomplish it? By earnest and persevering endeavors, as an individual and as a pastor, to enhance its efficiency and increase its circulation. As individual he can subscribe for it, read it, send it worth-while news items, "aid it with his learning" by writing for it (biographical or historical sketches, letters on timely topics, brief sermonettes, book reviews, doctrinal explanations, etc.), advertise in its columns, patronize its other advertisers, speak well of it to personal friends, say an occasional word of kindly encouragement to its editor, and pray that it may become a still

more effective agency for the propagation of the faith, the defense of religious truth, and the promotion of Christian morality. As pastor he can instruct his people in season and out of season on the absolute necessity of their taking Catholic papers as the only practical antidote to the poison of evil literature which is the outstanding danger of the day; he can advise them in passably strong terms not only to subscribe and pay for, but to read, the paper or papers approved and encouraged by the ordinary of the diocese; he can promote the organization of clubs of subscribers; he can urge the needs and claims of the Catholic press upon the members of his various societies; he can mould a Catholic public opinion that will brand as *un*-Catholic the home that does not receive at least one Catholic paper; he can introduce the paper into his school or at least can interest his school children in its contents; and he can secure the prayers of both children and adults for God's blessing on one of the most conspicuously important Catholic works of our time—the religious press.

It would be superfluous to insist on the point that, in the case of generous, energetic priestly service to the Catholic paper, virtue is emphatically its own reward. Should the selfish consideration, What is there in it for me? occur to the cleric who has hitherto been ignobly delinquent in this respect, the experience of all pastors who have manifested zeal where he has shown indifference may be cited to assure him that his following their example is, even on selfish grounds,

eminently worth while. Granted that he has the spiritual interests of his people at heart at all, it is safe to say that he will get from the paper much more than he gives. There is deeper truth than perhaps he takes account of in Leo XIII's comprehensive dictum: "A Catholic paper in a parish is a perpetual mission." In the mere matter of giving his people religious instruction on many a point which he never touches, and in interpreting for them the mind of the Church on questions of practical and timely interest, it renders him invaluable service; and in manifold other ways it effectively seconds his efforts to make his flock obedient children of the Church and genuinely God-fearing and God-loving men and women.

V

A CLERIC'S CORRESPONDENCE

"Better late than never" is not half so good a maxim as "Better never late."—*Anon.*

When the spirits sink too low, the best cordial is to read over all the letters of one's friends.—*Shenstone.*

Let your letter be written as accurately as you are able—I mean as to language, grammar, and stops; but as to the matter of it the less trouble you give yourself the better it will be. Letters should be easy and natural, and convey to the persons to whom we send them just what we should say if we were with them.—*Chesterfield.*

IT is something of a commonplace among the cultured to declare that one of the arts lost to us in this strenuous, hurried, nerve-racking twentieth century is conversation, the wise, cultivated, genial conversation which Emerson styled "the last flower of civilization, and the best result which life has to offer us—a cup for gods, which has no repentance." It is questionable, however, whether twentieth-century bustle and hurry is proving as fatal to the art of conversation as to its oldtime sister or cousin, the art of letter-writing. True, post-offices are multiplying at a rapid rate throughout the land, and the mail-bags bulge with innumerous envelopes, sealed and unsealed; but the overwhelming majority of their enclosures have to do with the sacrosanct modern deity, business; and comparatively few of the multitudinous pages daily carried hither and yon

deserve to be called real letters, or to be classified, in the phrase of the older rhetoricians, as epistolary correspondence.

The ubiquitous postal card did much to restrict the output of the genuine letters common in other days, and the distance-annihilating telephone has still further hampered the interchange of the lengthy and leisurely communications that were wont to brighten the eyes as the welcome carrier made his morning round. Business is business, of course; and our up-to-date methods of communication are immeasurably more efficient than were the antiquated contrivances of a few decades ago; yet one need not be condemned as a *laudator temporis acti* if he breathes an occasional sigh for the good old times when a bulky envelope in the morning mail proved an inspiration and a joy for the livelong day. The sigh indeed may be superfluous, since both the writer of these lines, and their reader may still, if they so desire, enjoy the pleasure of receiving welcome epistles; but as that pleasure is contingent on our writing similar epistles, we are apt to be influenced by the spirit of our age, and to declare that we have no time for such evidence of esteem or affection.

Whether or not, however, the priest has time to devote to social, friendly letters,—and on this point something will be said in a later paragraph, there is no denying the statement that he must find time for correspondence of some kind, or kinds. All clerics have to write business letters; most of them write at least a few social ones; and

some find it necessary to indite spiritual epistles. The average priest of the land, supposing him to be a worthy, zealous laborer in the vineyard of the Lord, probably finds that his correspondence occupies an hour or two a day on most days of the week. Just how he acquits himself of his duties in this respect is a matter about which it is a good deal easier to theorize than to speak with authority; but there are certain truths connected with the subject which young priests in particular need to bear in mind and which, accordingly, it may be worth while to expound.

And first, as regards business letters, it is of paramount importance that they be answered promptly. Not only is it the part of a gentleman to avoid occasioning vexatious delays to others; but a want of promptness or punctuality in replying to business communications is almost certain to result in annoyance, not to say disaster, to one's self. As Cecil has well said, "Method is the very hinge of business; and there is no method without punctuality." Dilatoriness in replying to letters which patently demand a speedy answer is a weakness and a fault in individual cases, and in the course of time becomes a habit little less than criminal. If half the priests who, three or four decades ago, copied in their writing-books "Procrastination is the thief of time" had taken that lesson to heart, and exemplified from the outset of their clerical careers their aversion to this time-thief in the matter of their letter-writing, a good many of us would have fewer mistakes to deplore, fewer

injuries to repair, and fewer losses to make good. Who has not known a dilatory priest whose failure to acknowledge a gift to one of his charitable works has resulted in the donor's decision to make that gift his last one? What bookseller or publisher has not had the experience of wasting time and stamps (to say nothing of temper) in sending reiterated dunning letters to priests for the payment of debts that could easily have been discharged months or even years before their bills were actually receipted? How many an easy-going pastor has allowed excellent opportunities to secure a bit of real estate or a building, which he really wanted, to pass him by unheeded simply because his habit of delaying till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day had grown stronger than his inconstant, vacillating will?

As for the structure or composition of a business letter, it need hardly be said that Chesterfield's advice, "the less trouble you give yourself about the matter of it the better it will be," is meant for the social epistle, not the business one. The more trouble you give yourself the better, as a rule, will be any communication of a business nature. Crystal clearness, utterly unambiguous statement, and a conciseness as marked as is consistent with intelligibility, are prime qualities in letters of this kind; and with no disrespect to the literary accomplishment of the clergy be it said, they are qualities less common than is either generally supposed or at all desirable. A slovenly style is much more likely than not to

characterize the letters of a cleric who writes comparatively little, and, excusable as such slovenliness may be in social communications to one's friends, it is condemnable and condemned in business documents. Just as the average graduate of the high school might profitably spend an additional term in mastering the difficulties of English orthography, so might many a graduate of the seminary advantageously devote hours not a few to the prosaic task of learning how to construct with thorough propriety an English sentence.

Spiritual letters, properly so called, are perhaps the least frequent epistles written by the ordinary, everyday priest, although at first blush one might fancy that they should be the most common of all his writings. The otherworldliness so consonant to his priestly character does no doubt crop out from time to time even in his gayest and most humorous epistles to his friends; but the professedly spiritual letter addressed to a penitent or a spiritual child, and devoted to an exposition of the interior life, growth in holiness, and spiritual direction generally, is probably the exception rather than the rule in clerical correspondence. That the ordinary pastor or curate might well do a great deal more in this line of sacerdotal work than he actually accomplishes is not perhaps an extravagant assertion; but it is one that need not be dwelt upon at any length in the present essay.

Given, however, that a priest does write even occasional letters of this character, it may be

worth while to remind him that some knowledge of ascetical theology is essential to his acquitting himself of the task with anything like success or profit. If it be urged that such familiarity with moral and dogmatic theology as suffices for oral direction in the confessional may well be enough for written direction in letters, the obvious reply is that, even for direction given *viva voce* to a penitent, a certain fund of ascetic knowledge is rather indispensable than negligible. Since ascetic theology is the science and art of leading a holy life, and since the confessor is safe to have among his penitents some at least who come to him more for help and counsel in leading such a life than for the primary object of the Sacrament of Penance, the forgiveness of sins, it seems reasonable to demand of him at the very least an acquaintance with the general principles of ascetics and a good working knowledge of the proper method of applying those principles in actual practice. Most priests presumably have in their libraries some or all of the following works, the study of which will furnish them with adequate knowledge for the common range of direction: St. Francis of Sales' *Introduction to a Devout Life, Spiritual Combat, Letters to Persons in Religion,* and to *Persons in the World;* Roderiguez' *Christian Perfection,* the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius;* the *Imitation; St. Teresa's Way of Perfection* and her *Life and Letters;* Scaramelli's *Ascetical Directory* and Faber's *Growth in Holiness.*

It is pertinent to remark that the mere using

of the foregoing books as spiritual reading does not constitute the work recommended to him who would require some knowledge of ascetical theology: they should be studied as scientific treatises to be mastered by the intellect, not perused as devotional works to warm the heart and persuade the will. Of *Growth in Holiness,* indeed, Dr. Scannell shrewdly remarks: "As a book for spiritual reading, it is most disheartening; as a manual of ascetical theology, it is unsurpassed." It may be consoling to some readers to learn that Faber himself found St. John of the Cross to be so far beyond him that he could not get much good out of that great mystic's works. And it would be superfluous to add that a thorough knowledge of the Life of Our Lord and the writings of St. Thomas would constitute a fairly adequate substitute for all the volumes mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Many a priest, it is quite possible, may fail to see in the foregoing paragraphs any thing that particularly concerns himself. Not a few parish priests of small towns or villages, and a larger number of strictly rural pastors may conceivably comment on what has thus far been said: "Oh, well; all this has nothing to do with me. My business letters are of the rarest, and as for the spiritual variety, I have neither the ability nor the occasion to indite epistles of that sort." Granting that this comment contains a good deal more of truth than in all probability is really the case, it does not at all follow that letter-writing is a purely academic rather than a practical ques-

tion for such clerics. It is indeed difficult to imagine any priest so circumstanced that he is free from the obligation, binding in charity if not in justice, of writing the third class of letters of which we have spoken,—social or friendly ones. This obligation may readily be more pressing on the kind of priests just mentioned, those in small towns and villages or in the country districts, than on others because, as a rule, they have by far the greater amount of leisure to devote thereto and can consequently allege fewer valid excuses for neglecting such correspondence.

Deservedly first among the social letters which it is incumbent upon all priests to write are those to parents and other near relatives. Filial piety and love and gratitude make such writing a duty even in the scarcely conceivable case in which it is not a pleasure. As long as father or mother is still alive, the priestly son who is at all worthy of either his priesthood or his sonship will, from time to time at least, gladden the hearts of the old folks with messages of affectionate import and kindly interest and loving solicitude. Even those religious priests who, more completely than their brethren of the secular clergy, have obeyed Our Lord's injunction to leave father and mother for His Name's sake, are not exempt from obedience to the fourth commandment; and one of the most practical and most effective means of honoring one's father or mother when they are far from us is to write to them at not too distant intervals. A little more thoughtfulness and consideration on this point on the part of a good many clerics

would notably increase the happiness of their parents while still here below, and save themselves considerable unavailing regret or remorse when God at length calls those parents home. And what is true in the case of father and mother is in a measure also true of a priest's brothers and sisters and other near relatives. All these have a quasi-right to hear from the Father John, or Edward, or Maurice who has long been the object of their care and prayer and love and pride.

Another species of social letter which a gentleman of culture, such as his profession supposes a priest to be, cannot well forego writing is the occasional epistle,—of congratulation, condolence, etc. There is a whole apostolate of kindly service embodied in the judicious penning of such letters; and the occasions which justify them are far more numerous perhaps than we are willing to acknowledge. "Two in distress make sorrow less," says the proverb, and no one who has had his own grief assuaged and lessened by a sympathetic message from friend or acquaintance can doubt that the inditing of such missives is eminently worth while, or that the comfort they give more than repays the trouble they cost. So, too, with letters of congratulation. We are assured by Dr. Johnson that "the applause of a single human being is of great consequence," and when the human being is a priest the applause does not assuredly lose anything of its magnitude. A few words of kindly felicitation penned to a friend, an acquaintance, or even a stranger, who has done something exceptionally good,—how inconsider-

able the effort they occasion the writer, yet how grateful the glow with which they suffuse the heart of the recipient!

Especially to younger priests is the kindness of such letters due from their older clerical brethren. And just here, let a word be said in favor of giving praise where praise is due. The ultra-cautious spirit that refrains from expressing approval of another's achievement, or expresses it with hedging word and qualifying phrase, lest forsooth the achiever's vanity may be set ablaze and he become a victim of megalomania, is a reprehensible spirit, not a commendable one. Exceptional cases apart, it is safe to assume that the man or woman who has the ability to do anything notably good is dowered with a sufficient amount of common sense to allow the proper discount for eulogies that are at all extravagant, and it is perenially true that

> For every silly head by plaudits turned,
> There pine a hundred hearts for praise well earned.

In good sooth, the failure to give generous, unqualified approbation to those who deserve it is due not infrequently to the miserable and contemptible passion of envy or jealousy, loudly as he whom the passion rules may disavow his being swayed thereby. It is all very well to express prudent fears that So-and-so's success as a preacher or writer, his popularity as a confessor, his effectiveness as a convert-maker, etc., may render him proud and prove his ultimate undoing; but it may not be amiss to go to the root of

our "damning with faint praise," and see whether it is not the base envy which

> withers at another's joy
> And hates that excellence it cannot reach.

One of the most gratifying letters which the present writer has ever received came to him a good many years ago from a total stranger who won my lasting gratitude by telling me of five or six conversions which, to his personal knowledge, had been brought about by an article of mine, on Our Lady, contributed to the *Ave Maria.* And such swelling as I experienced on reading the kindly epistle was entirely of the heart, not the head.

"Occasional" letters may be sent quite congruously to mere acquaintances, or even, as in the case just mentioned, to strangers, but most social epistles are of course exchanged between friends, in the specific sense of that word,—those who entertain for each other feelings of personal regard and preference. Does the average priest write a sufficient number of these friendly missives? Does he practice the kindness involved therein as often as he reasonably can and should? That he has friends enough among his brother-clerics is abundantly clear at the time of his annual or biennial retreat. The commonest of excuses made at that period for the breaking of the silence recommended by the retreat-master and the bishop is: "Well, you know; the fellows haven't seen one another for so long that they naturally want to have a chat." And how many of them have employed, since their previous meeting, the best

possible substitute for a chat,—the friendly, free-and-easy, genial letter? It is quite possible that a sensible increase of clerical inter-correspondence during the year would promote a better observance of at least "the grand silence" during the retreat-period.

No priest who seriously reflects on the comfort and consolation and encouragement, on the lively satisfaction, the sensible pleasure, the genuine delight that have sometimes, if not often, come to himself personally through timely letters from friendly correspondents can fail to acknowledge that a genial letter may well rank among the most kindly of acts. Who has not, at least occasionally, discovered that a few bright, chatty pages from a distant friend are a more sovereign cure for drooping spirits, sickness of heart, and weariness of brain than are all the remedies to be found in the doctor's prescription book or on the druggist's shelves? Who has not been spurred at times to renewed energy, confirmed in good and noble purposes, or stimulated to the performance of arduous duty by merely a dozen lines of intelligent approval from a sympathetic well-wisher? Yes; social letters afford an excellent means for exercising kindness, and kindness is a quality pre-eminently fitting in the priest who follows, at however great a distance, the model High Priest who "went about doing good."

Of the excuses generally given for failing to write to friends perhaps the most common, as well as the most flimsy, is that one "has no time." Very many who allege that reason have doubtless

persuaded themselves that it is true; but the instances in which it really *is* true are probably far less numerous than is generally believed. Of the eighteen thousand priests resident in these United States, are there eighteen hundred, or a hundred and eighty, or even eighteen who in downright earnestness can truthfully affirm that they are so habitually busy with more important matters that a monthly letter to an intimate friend is quite impracticable? Is it not a matter both of personal record and of general experience that the busiest of men have the most leisure? It is altogether doubtful that the ordinary priest of our day and country is as genuinely busy, now that he is "on the mission," as he was throughout his college and seminary days. If he found ample time, as a student, for letter-writing, and cannot apparently find it now, may not the real explanation be that, as a student and a seminarian, his hours and their employment were regulated by intelligent system, and that at present they are subject to haphazard and unmethodical whims and caprices? One cleric in a hundred is possibly as overworked as all the hundred profess to be; but if half the energy wasted in killing time were devoted to utilizing it, the average cleric would discover abundant leisure for much more extensive correspondence than he conducts at present.

A less frequent excuse for abstention from letter-writing, and one fully as hollow as the foregoing, is inability,—"I can't write a letter." In the mouth of a professional man such an assertion is little less than absurd. Given the ability to

write at all, the composition of a letter is scarcely more difficult than the carrying on of a conversation. For, after all, a real letter is nothing more than what Blair called it long ago, "a conversation, carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance." To suppose that a person cannot write a good one until he has mastered all the technicalities of grammar and rhetoric or acquired all the graces of a finished literary style, is a capital mistake. Hundreds of thoroughly excellent letters are written every day by people who never heard of the principles of unity, mass, and coherence as applied to composition, and who would scarcely recognize their work under the name of epistolary correspondence. Not that we would decry reasonable attention to orthography, grammar, or any other requisite to the writing of good English. These certainly have their place, even in so informal a piece of composition as a letter between the closest friends. Imperfect knowledge of such requisites does not, however, constitute a valid reason for withholding from our friends the particular kindness of which we are speaking. Thaddeus Stevens may have been justified in refusing to recommend an applicant for a place at West Point because, as he put it, "I would not give an appointment to any blasted fool who spells 'until' with two ll's and 'till' with one;" but we have all no doubt received in our time very charming and delightful letters in which the appearance of an occasional word differed somewhat from that which it wears in the dictionary. And, unless we

are intolerable snobs, the variation affected us but lightly, if at all. Literary excellence is a good thing in any piece of composition; some degree of it may be considered practically essential in business letters and printed correspondence; but the man or woman who does not prize beyond all graces of style the true kindness, sincerity, sympathy, and affection embodied in a genuine letter of friendship has surely distorted the relative values of form and substance, and doesn't deserve to receive anything more closely resembling a real letter than the stilted treatises in miniature which, a few centuries ago, authors used to indite, not for private perusal, but for the public press.

The universality of the liking for letters, and the very common neglect to write as many of them as is desirable were made evident to the author about a decade ago by the vogue enjoyed by a little rondel of his that went the rounds of the press, often enough without the credit which is herewith properly assigned to it:

Could absent friends but know
What joy their letters bring,
How like a breath of spring
They set our hearts aglow,
They'd write more oft, I trow,
And give their pens full swing,—
Could absent friends but know
What joy their letters bring.

Time's stream would smoother flow,
Our little griefs take wing,
And great ones lose their sting,—
All life would gladder grow,
Could absent friends but know
What joy their letters bring.

Of all the readers whose eyes run over these lines there is probably not one that has not the power, and, despite his protest, the time as well, to gladden or comfort or encourage an absent friend by a page or two of pleasant messages, interesting ecclesiastical news, courteous inquiries, assurances of continued remembrances and esteem, and all those little nothings that are worth to others so incalculably more than they cost ourselves. Don't postpone the kindly act; close the book; and sit down at once to write your letter.

VI

CLERICAL WIT AND HUMOR

A joyful mind maketh age flourishing; a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones.—*Proverbs: xvii, 22.*

Wit loses its respect with the good when it is seen in company with malice; and to smile at the jest which places a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.—*Sheridan.*

As the non-humorous and unwitty constitute the overwhelming majority, they have succeeded, partially at least, by dint of ceaseless iteration, in propagating the idea that mental dryness is indicative of wisdom and that a wit or humorist is lacking in the substantial qualities of mind—all of which is mere moonshine.—*Champ Clark.*

ONCE upon a time the word "wit" was universally accepted as being identical in meaning with wisdom; nowadays, in the vocabulary of many a peremptory sobersides, it figures as a synonym for wisdom's absence, folly. When Swift wrote

> 'Tis an old maxim in the schools
> That flattery's the food of fools,
> Yet now and then your men of *wit*
> Will condescend to take a bit,—

he evidently used the word to signify knowledge, sagacity, intelligence, judgment, good sense; while these very lines of his furnish an example of that intellectual dexterity for which in modern usage the word has come to stand. Not that the original meaning of the term is even now obsolete in either the singular or the plural form, as is clear from

such idiomatic locutions as: "he has not the wit to see it," "the remedy is past the wit of man to devise," "to be out of one's wits," "to have one's wits about him," etc. As a rule, however, wit at present means the keen perception and apt expression of those unexpected relations between ideas which awaken pleasure and especially amusement; and "a wit" is one who possesses this quality, or often, as one of the lexicographers puts it, "a person who has a keen perception of the incongruous or ludicrous, and uses it for the amusement and frequently at the expense of others."

Humor, as distinguished from wit, is a facetious or jocular turn of mind; the disposition to find, or the faculty of finding, ludicrous aspects or suggestions in common facts or notions. Wit has been graphically defined as mental lightning, and perhaps as good an illustration as can be given of the relationship which it bears to humor is to say that humor is the electrical atmosphere and wit the flash. "Humor," says Landor, "indulges in breath of drollery rather than in play and brilliancy of point. Wit vibrates and spirts; humor springs up exuberantly as from a fountain and runs on." The reader has often spent a pleasant evening with a party of friends, has passed several hours in agreeable converse and the interchange of stories and drolleries that have excited merriment and hilarity, has thoroughly enjoyed in a word the genial atmosphere of the occasion; and yet, when called upon the next day to relate some of the mirth-provoking incidents, has been un-

able to specify anything in particular. In such a case, the evening was probably a humorous rather than a witty one. If, on the contrary, on the following day you button-holed a friend, and, informing him that "So-and-so said a very good thing last night," proceeded to repeat the saying, it is safe to affirm that through the circumambient atmosphere of congenial humor there flashed occasionally the shooting-stars of wit.

Another distinction between the two qualities is that wit is purely intellectual, while humor may be expressed by a smile, a grimace, or an attitude. The fun of a humorous story, for instance, may consist principally, or even wholly, in mimicry, in reproducing the peculiarities of tone, accent, emphasis, gesture, or general action of an eccentric character; while a witty story or sally depends not at all on such accessories: *its* whole value lies in the thought, and the brilliancy of its point is only slightly affected by the presence or absence of histrionic ability in the narrator. Humor may be coexistent, it is needless to say, with the gentlest and deepest pathos; and is indeed so generally kindly that Thackeray used to call it a mixture of love and wit.

Having thus defined our terms, and so eliminated one common source of misunderstanding and futile disputation, let us see what is the congruous attitude of clerics towards these condiments of human intercourse. It is scarcely necessary to remark that wit and humor are in themselves indifferent, unmoral. They are not tabooed, debarred, condemned, or forbidden,

either by the commandments of God, by the precepts of His Church, by the teachings of Christian or pagan philosophy, by the collective wisdom of the great and good of all ages, or by the common sense that has permeated social life from the dawn of creation down to this twentieth century. Were it worth while to do so, one might quote Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Isaac Barrow, and a host of other celebrities who laud wit and humor in no stinted terms, praising them under such names as facetiousness, easy drollery, gaiety, amenity of disposition, airiness of spirit, gentle joking, urbanity, politeness with a dash of irony, good humor, sprightliness, quiet light-heartedness, harmless joviality, the gleeman's art, and a score of other synonymous phrases. There is not indeed in wit and humor anything at all incompatible with Christian virtue, genuine piety, or even exalted sanctity. "Piety," says Father Faber, "is not the sad and gloomy thing that morose fanaticism or morbid asceticism would make it." The spirit of true piety, he adds, is cheerfulness. Among the thousands of saints whom the Church has raised to her altars, not one of whom we have any record was canonized for having worn a long face. As a matter of fact, there is as much sound sense as genuine wit in the French pun, "Un saint triste est un triste saint," which naturally loses some of its point in the English rendering, "A sorrowful saint is a sorry saint."

No very profound knowledge of hagiology is requisite to convince one that both the lives and

the writings of many of the most famous saints testify to their advocacy and their rational enjoyment of genuine wit and humor. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis of Sales, St. Philip Neri and St. Joseph of Cupertino, St. Anselm of Canterbury and St. Felix of Cantilice, St. Bernardine of Siena and St. Anthony of Padua, and (quite as a matter of course) the Irish pair, Saints Columba and Brendan, were all fond of jocular allusions and humorous sallies. St. Laurent, while he lay in torture on his gridiron over a slow fire, playfully said to his executioner: "I'm roasted enough on one side; turn me over." St. James Intercisus, when his fingers and toes were cut off by his tormentors, said to them with a smile: "Now that the boughs are cropped, cut down the trunk;" and Blessed Thomas More, on the point of being beheaded, bade the executioner wait till he drew aside his beard, jokingly remarking: "*That* hasn't committed treason, anyway."

If still higher authority than the saints be demanded for the legitimacy of wit and humor, one may appeal even to Holy Writ. Ecclesiastes assures us that there is "a time to weep and a time to laugh;" Proverbs declares that "A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance;" Psalm lxvii. tells us, "Let the just feast, and rejoice before God: and be delighted with gladness;" and St. Paul gives the Philippians the comprehensive advice, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice." For that matter, the Bible itself contains more than one concrete instance of indubitable wit. To cite only two examples, take Job's

ironical remark to his comforters: "No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom will die with you," and Elias' taunt to the priests of Baal: "Cry with a louder voice, for he is a god; and perhaps he is talking or is in an inn, or on a journey; or perhaps he is asleep and must be awaked." And now, after the foregoing elaborate vindication of the innocency of wit and humor, if there be still some crusty reader who condemns them as un-Christian, or at least incongruous in a priest, one may be pardoned for saying to him what gruff old Dr. Johnson once said to a thick-headed opponent: "Sir, I have found you an argument; I am not obliged to find you an understanding."

It is true of course that, like many other, not to say *all* other good things, wit and humor, and more especially the former, are liable to abuse; and that clerical dryasdusts can at need cite unimpeachable authority which apparently deprecates even their use. The Book of Proverbs, for instance, assures us that: "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin: but he that refraineth his lips is most wise;" and again: "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul; but he that hath no guard on his speech shall meet with evils." Yet it is doubtful whether the prosaic cleric who proffers such texts as valid arguments against witty or humorous speech will care to follow them up with this other saying of Proverbs, quite as pertinent to the subject: "Even a fool, if he will hold his peace, shall be counted wise: and if he close his lips, a man of understanding."

It is quite conceivable indeed that the ultra-serious Rector of a Seminary, counseling his fourth-year students as to their post-ordination deportment, should give them the advice which Governor Corwin once gave to the members of his law-class: "Young men, if you desire a reputation for wisdom, never joke; be as solemn as an ass;" but it is *in*conceivable that the average young American ecclesiastic, of normal level-headedness, should act upon the advice, or look upon it as other than as a pretty good joke in itself.

It has been said above that, of the two qualities, wit is perhaps the more likely to be abused. As a matter of historical record, and of everyday experience as well, the brilliant wit, lay or clerical, is far more liable than his merely humorous brother to inflict unnecessary pain, to provoke anger and resentment, and to become guilty of sundry other sins against charity, even supposing that he avoids, as he occasionally does not, offenses against justice. It requires no slight degree of holiness as well as gentlemanliness to refrain from uttering a witty retort that would surely discomfit an opponent and delight the bystanders; and it is probable that most readers of this essay can count among their clerical friends and acquaintances more wits than saints. Tom Moore was very likely guilty of considerable, if excusable, exaggeration when, after Sheridan's death, he wrote of his friend as one

> Whose wit in the combat as gentle as bright
> Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade,—

and, in any case, it is worth while for everybody

whom God has endowed with intellectual keenness to remember Rochefoucauld's dictum: "The greatest fault of a penetrating wit is to go beyond the mark." What constitutes its proper mark, its legitimate scope and purview, has never perhaps been more comprehensively and adequately set forth than by Barrow in the seventeenth century:

Wit is proper and commendable when it enlightens the intellect by good sense conveyed in jocular expression; when it infringes neither on religion, charity, and justice, nor on peace; when it maintains good humor, sweetens conversation, and makes the endearments of society more captivating; when it exposes what is vile and base to contempt; when it reclaims the vicious and laughs them into virtue; when it answers what is below refutation; when it replies to obloquy; when it counterbalances the fashion of error and vice, playing off their own weapons of ridicule against them; when it adorns truth; when it is not used upon subjects improper for it, or in a manner unbecoming, in measure intemperate, at an undue season, or to a dangerous end.

The foregoing field for wit's legitimate activities is surely ample enough to satisfy even those who are most abundantly provided therewith; and it is consoling to know that its uses are so many that it may be exercised quite sufficiently in perfectly proper ways without being abused at all. It is gratifying, too, to know that, while "wit" is no longer synonymous with "wisdom," neither is it the latter's antonym or opposite. 'Tis well that it is not, for, as Scott says: "Though wit be very

useful, yet unless a wise man has the keeping of it, that knows when, where, and how to apply it, it is like wild-fire, that runs hissing about, and blows up every thing that comes in its way." Let it be said for the encouragement of younger priests of brilliant parts, and for the honor of the cloth generally, that, neither in the case of such witty clerics as have achieved international fame, —Father Arthur O'Leary, for instance, or "Father Prout," Father Tom Burke, O.P., or Father Healy of Bray—nor in that of such of their intellectual peers as have ever come under the observation of the present writer, could it be said with truth that they had less judgment than wit, more sail than ballast. And, that exceptional wittiness is no handicap to the American priest, and no bar to his ecclesiastical preferment, is abundantly clear to any one who enjoys even a limited acquaintance among the members of the American hierarchy. The fact is that, in nine cases out of ten, brilliant wit implies the possession, rather than the want, of notable understanding, sound judgment, and abundant common sense.

Notwithstanding all this, however, perhaps a young cleric might do worse than pray, in a paraphrase of, "Give me neither beggary, nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life"—Give me neither stupidity, nor wit: give me only a saving sense of humor. Exaggeration may characterize this statement of an American essayist: "There is certainly no defense against adverse fortune which is, on the whole, so effectual as an habitual sense of humor;" but it is indubitably true that

such a sense is well called "a modulating and restraining balance-wheel," and that this power of perceiving relations of a mirth-provoking kind, this capacity of being affected by the ludicrous aspects of various matters and occurrences in the lives of others and in our own as well, is a providential gift for which to be thankful. It helps to give us a true perspective, to prevent our taking ourselves and others too seriously, to make us recognize our limitations, to lessen the jar of everyday disturbances, and to flood our daily life with salutary mental sunshine.

It may sound paradoxical in the statement, but it is true, nevertheless, that a keener, more genuine sense of humor would restrain many a pseudo-humorist from conversational excesses and extravagances which make the judicious grieve. It would moderate, for instance, the activities of the confirmed inveterate story-teller or anecdotist,—a character more or less common in all clerical circles. Oliver Wendell Holmes is authority for the dictum that "a thought is often original though you have uttered it a hundred times;" but, however orthodox the saying may be when restricted to thoughts, it is certainly heterodox when applied to anecdotes. The story that you have told a hundred times is unmistakably trite so far as you are concerned, and in all probability is thoroughly stale to your auditors as well. It is a risky experiment to take it for granted that even an anecdote comparatively new to ourselves has not been heard by the majority of the company to whom we narrate it; and to monopolize the attention

of a social gathering by our long-drawn-out narration of stories which reiterated repetitions have made as commonplace as remarks upon the weather is to display unpardonable want of tact and an utter absence of a true sense of humor.

There is nothing surer, however, than that just such absence of tact will often be shown by the humorist, clerical or lay, who has allowed himself to become dominated by the anecdote habit. Without any preliminary inquiry as to whether or not his hearers are already acquainted with the story he has in mind, he proceeds to inflict it upon them with far less regard for any entertainment they may derive from his narrative than for his own delight in hearing himself talk. The need of the "chestnut bell" has unfortunately survived its use; and in its absence perhaps the only adequate punishment for the inveterate raconteur who persists in serving up the mildewed remains of long-deceased witticisms is to greet the conclusion of his tale with a chorus of groans instead of a peal of laughter.

The cleric who is more or less the slave of the anecdote, or story-telling, habit is evidently afflicted with too much of a good thing. "No sane person," says Champ Clark, "would elect to be continually cooped up with another who is witty and humorous on all occasions, any more than he would desire to dwell in a land of perpetual day; but sunshine is a good thing, nevertheless." We may very well admit, with Charles Lamb, that "a laugh is worth a hundred groans in any market," without committing ourselves to the sen-

timent that the normal expression of the human countenance, even during hours of relaxation and pleasure, should be the perpetual grinning of the proverbial Cheshire cat. To have in one's memory a goodly store of brilliant epigrams, happy illustrations, mirth-provoking jests, ludicrous bulls, pointed repartees, humorous tales, and witty anecdotes, is to be provided with ammunition that is safe to come into legitimate play often enough on the platform, in the smoking room, at social functions and clerical gatherings; but it is a mistake to be continually exploding one's verbal squibs with the reckless profusion of the Yankee small boy setting off innumerous fire-crackers on the Fourth of July.

The truth is that the priest who has achieved a reputation as a good story-teller is very apt to have what our French friends call "the defects of his qualities." With the lapse of time and the strengthening of his habit, he grows prone to resent competition in his particular rôle. To take his turn with the rest of the company at telling a story becomes a sacrifice beyond his achievement. He must hold the floor for an indefinite period, the applause that greets one anecdote setting him off forthwith upon another, and the possibly perfunctory laughter called forth by this second serving merely as an excuse to begin a third. He forgets, in a word, one of the characteristics which, according to Newman, denote the true gentleman,—"he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome." Now, be it ever so brilliant, monologue inevitably becomes weari-

some, especially when the speaker's auditors are anxious to substitute dialogue therefor.

Another danger into which the confirmed lay anecdotist is very apt to fall, and one from which his clerical counterpart is by no means immune, is the tendency to indulge his propensity even at the cost of violating the rules of reverence and decorum, not to say those of common decency. The desire to raise a laugh becomes, when habitually and excessively catered to, a species of mania that will attempt to gratify itself at risks quite incompatible with a due sense of gentlemanly self-respect, to say nothing of sacerdotal dignity.

While it is quite true that vulgarity or coarseness of language does not always connote immodesty of thought, and that there may be anecdotes in which the incidental grossness is lost in the sparkling wit, the judicious cleric is rather prudish than ultra-free in narrating such anecdotes himself, or in applauding their narration by others. Lay friends of priests should have nothing to learn, on the score of clean conversation, from soldiers; yet an incident told of General Grant is worth proffering to their attention. At a military dinner in the early seventies a certain major noted for the broadness or nastiness of his stories began one with his usual formula: "Well, as there are no ladies present, ..."—"No, interrupted Grant, "but there are *gentlemen*."

This mention of ladies suggests yet another danger to be sedulously avoided by the clergy, that of disedifying, not to say scandalizing, their housekeepers or servant maids by the undue

levity or looseness of the talk they allow in the presence of these women or girls. A dining-room into which during the course of the meal members of the other sex are entering every few minutes is emphatically no place for stories bordering, be it ever so slightly, on the coarse or the vulgar. Still less is it the proper place for the narration of ludicrous incidents connected with the confessional,—if indeed *any* place be fit for such narratives. In Isaac Barrow's enumeration, quoted on a former page, of the occasions and circumstances in which wit is commendable, he mentions "when it is not used upon subjects improper for it;" and the majority of experienced ecclesiastics will, we think, endorse the statement that the sacrament of penance, and all that appertains thereto, is clearly such a subject. Apart from any consideration of a danger, however remote, of violating in the slightest degree the *sigillum,* the making of one's real or fictitious experiences "in the box" the theme of one's wit or humor is an exhibition of more than questionable taste. Confessional stories—the best and most innocent of them—are not particularly edifying even to clerics themselves; and to narrate them, or encourage their narration in the presence of the laity may well be styled, in Talleyrand's phrase, as "worse than a crime,—it is a blunder."

In view of what has been said about taking it for granted that a story new to one's self is not old to one's hearers, it would clearly be hazardous to cite here many, if any, concrete instances of clerical wit and humor. Such citing would all

too probably elicit from the average reader some such criticism as the oldtime reviewer's caustic comment on a volume now forgotten: "There are some good things and some new things; but the good things are not new, and the new things are not good." And yet, in the present writer's experience, so many hoary anecdotes that were ancient even in his boyhood have been rejuvenated of late years, that one is tempted to adopt Bacon's principle in compiling his "Collection of Apothegms, New and Old." He says he fanned (winnowed) the old, omitting none because they were vulgar (familiar), for many vulgar ones are excellent good." Lincoln once said to Noah Brooks, "I remember a good story when I hear it, but I never invented anything original; I am only a retail dealer." That is probably true of the great majority of story-tellers, clerical or lay; and hence the danger of one's good things turning out to be "not new." Still, when one sees such up-to-date newspapers as the New York *Sun,* the Chicago *Tribune,* and the Washington *Post* reprinting anecdotes which one remembers having told a quarter of a century ago, there is perhaps some excuse for venturing the recital of one or two, even though one cannot, in print, take the judicious preliminary precaution of inquiring "Have you ever heard, etc."

The witty retort that "replies to obloquy," confounds impertinence, or silences a bore, is universally appreciated; and such retorts have been innumerable in the history of jest, from the time when Father O'Leary told a dissenting parson

who had aggressively informed him: "Sir, I could never accept Purgatory."—"Faith, you may go farther and fare worse," down to the recent reply of Father M. to a fellow who accosted him with: "Well, sir, I am an evolutionist, and I want to discuss the question with you. I am also an annihilationist. I believe that when I die that will be the end of me."—"Thank God for that," devoutly exclaimed Father M. as he resumed his interrupted walk. A pedestrian friend of ours whose pedometer habitually registers ten or twelve miles a day, was being chaffed by a brother cleric who has a long-standing reputation for loquacity. "Some of us," said the chaffer, "have to work; we can't afford to spend the day on the road."—"That's all right," replied the pedestrian, "but if my pedometer were attached to your lower jaw, it would record at the end of the day a good many more miles than I walk." There is perhaps more pathos than wit in Father Murphy's reply to the inquiry of a friend, "Father, did you ever stand at the church door after your sermon and listen to what the people said about it as they passed out?" Said Father Murphy: "I did once—" a pause and a sigh, "but I'll never do it again."

A bishop of our acquaintance is authority for the truth of the following instance of humor's arising from a verbal mannerism. The foreign-born rector of a Western seminary had developed, in his acquisition of the English language, an especial fondness for the phrase "of course." He rather overworked the phrase in his ordinary

conversation; but did not thoroughly realize the fact until he found himself one morning beginning the prayers in common—"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and *of course* of the Holy Ghost." Apropos of bishops, an Anglican prelate is credited with what a punster might style a *handy* illustration. He had been remonstrating with a young rector of sporting tendencies for driving tandem, to the scandal of the pious and the discredit of the church. "But," protested the rector, "your lordship also drives two horses, and the only difference between us is that your lordship drives them side by side and I drive them one in front of the other."—"That scarcely covers the case," replied the bishop; "when I place my hands thus [palm touching palm as in prayer], you will perceive that I place them in an attitude becoming a Christian and a bishop; but when I place them thus [extending the fingers of both hands one in front of the other and applying his thumb to his nose] you will admit that the connotation is not quite the same."

Not so victorious in the matter of repartee was the Irish bishop who, a good many years ago, examined Mike Sullivan in catechism. Mike, a big, good-natured gossoon of sixteen or seventeen, having finished the course of studies in the Brothers' school in his native Ballyna—something or other, had journeyed to the episcopal residence to consult his lordship about entering the preparatory seminary. Being shown into the reception room Mike seated himself in the easiest chair he could find, crossed one leg over the other, and

leisurely awaited the bishop's entrance. His lordship was a somewhat dignified, ceremonious prelate, the last of men with whom to take a liberty. On entering the room he began walking up and down its length, interrogating Mike as he did so. "What's your name?"—"Mike Sullivan, my lord."—"Where are you from?"—From Ballyna, etc., up yonder."—"What do you want?"—"Well, I—but sit down, my lord, sit down." The bishop cast a withering glance at the lad as he replied, icily, "I suppose a man may do as he likes in his own house."—"Oh, of course," said Mike, "if your lordship doesn't want to sit down you needn't. Well, I was going to say that I've finished at the Brothers' school up home, and that if your lordship pleases I'd like to go to the seminary."—"Do you know your catechism?"—"To be sure, my lord; at least I think I do." The Bishop thereupon began with the first chapter of Butler, putting the opening questions, "Who made the world?" etc., the candidate for the seminary giving the correct replies. When, however, to the question, "*Where* is God?" the boy gave the answer of the book, "God is everywhere, but is said principally to be in Heaven, where he manifests Himself to the blessed," the prelate suddenly switched off from the text and inquired: "And what does God do in Heaven?"—"Faith," replied Mike, with just the suggestion of a twinkle in his roguish Irish eye, "faith, I suppose He does as He likes in His own house." And his examination ended right there.

It is perhaps unnecessary to remind would-be

clerical humorists that "wit is the salt of conversation, not the food," and that Chesterfield has wisely said: "It is by vivacity and wit that man shines in company; but trite jokes and loud laughter reduce him to a buffoon." Young clerics should bear in mind that a remark or a retort which would be merely witty if addressed to their coevals or equals may well become an impertinence when addressed to their seniors or superiors; old priests and ecclesiastical dignitaries need reminding that in a contest of wits the recognized law is "give and take," and that if they condescend to crack jokes at the expense of their juniors or inferiors in rank, they have no right to stand on their dignity and complain if they are paid in kind. Finally, both young and old of every grade should remember that the ephemeral applause following a witty sally or humorous story is all too dearly purchased if sally or story has offended modesty or reverence, justice or fraternal charity.

VII

OUR QUEEN AND MOTHER

He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.—*St. John: xix, 26-27.*

Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*St. Matthew, xviii, 3.*

Every grace which is communicated to this world has a three-fold origin: it flows from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, and from the Virgin to us.—*St. Bernardine of Siena.*

OUR Blessed Lady! Is there a Catholic pulpit in Christendom that is not resonant with her gracious name? Is there a Catholic rectory the wide world over whose spiritual atmosphere is not clarified and warmed by her beneficent influence? Is there a single priest among the tens of thousands to whom, not less cogently than to St. John, Our Lord has said, "Behold thy mother," whose intellect does not avow her grandeur, whose tongue does not proclaim her glories, whose heart does not pay her the tribute of its love? Devotion to the Blessed Virgin! Planted when the Almighty's promise of a Redeemer to come lightened the burden of our first parents' woe, taking deep and vigorous root when the apostolic twelve paid loving homage to the Virgin-Mother in the flushing dawn of the Christian era, and developing a lusty growth through all the centuries that have intervened between the "Woman,

behold thy son" of Calvary and the authoritative decree of Pope Pius IX. with its corroborative "I am the Immaculate Conception" of Lourdes, it is the widest-spreading, most umbrageous tree that has yet appeared in the Church's history to beautify and cheer the world redeemed by that Church's Founder.

Now, if all this be so, and surely no true priest will presume to question it, what need should there be of recalling to the minds of clerical readers their congruous attitude towards their Queen and their Mother? The need engendered by human weakness, by the progressively destructive effects of a routine degenerating into mere mechanical action, by the perennial distinction between intellectual assent to a given doctrine and practical conduct in accordance therewith. If our personal devotion to Our Lady were at all in proportion to our knowledge of her prerogatives, even the least scholarly among us would require no extraneous aid to intensify our love for her or stimulate our zeal in imparting that love to others. The youngest child in our parish school knows enough about the Mother of God to love her well and pray to her confidently; and it may be that some of us might profitably barter all our theological erudition concerning the *Deipara* for a fuller measure of the child's confidence and love. It is quite possible to be thoroughly conversant with Mariology, to know all that the Church expressly teaches and all that the Fathers and Doctors venture as opinions about the Blessed Virgin, possible indeed to preach

about her eloquently and endeavor to spread her devotion among others, without having, oneself, that habitual attitude of mind and heart towards her which is the real test of our devotion's genuineness.

If there is one defect more prominent than another in the conduct of the average cleric in his relations with the Blessed Virgin, it is perhaps that he lays too much stress upon her queenliness and too little on her motherhood and the qualities implied in that word of sweet savor. Her grandeur and power he extols unstintedly, her loving-kindness and willingness to exert her power in our behalf are less emphasized, or, if they *are* insisted upon in his sermons and instructions to his people, they are too often minimized in his personal petitions and ejaculations. Unless we become as little children, we are assured that we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven; and unless we have learned to visualize Our Lady as the tender, loving mother of our individual self, one to whom we can and do appeal with the simplest and most childlike confidence in her power and will effectively to aid us, we are unquestionably derelict in our duty to the Mother whom Jesus gave us, and unconscionably neglectful of one of the most potent of all means whereby to attain either the perfection of our state or the bare salvation of our souls.

Does it savor of exaggeration to declare that priests of God sometimes, not to say frequently, lack this childlike confidence? Let the reader

examine his own heart and ask himself how he has acted time and time again in the presence of some violent temptation. He has prayed to Our Lady, has repeated Hail Marys, has said the Beads, it may be, asking her to procure him strength to overcome the tempter (whether the world, the flesh, or the devil); but has not his prayer been rather a perfunctory precaution than a genuine cry for help that he not only hoped, but *expected,* to be granted? Even while his lips murmured the suppliant words, has he not been convinced at heart, not that he would conquer, but that he would fall? Intellectually, he believed in the power of his heavenly Queen to help him on to victory; but intimately, in the very depths of heart and soul, he lacked undoubting trust in his loving Mother's willingness, her eagerness even, to come to his assistance. The blest assurance with which the child throws itself into its mother's arms as a certain refuge from threatening danger has not been his, and he has fallen a victim to his want of confidence.

It matters not that, in the pulpit or the confessional, the priest habitually points out the folly of this course of action; all too often in his personal conduct he is fain to confess

> . . . Video meliora proboque,
> Deteriora sequor.

Preaching is one thing, practicing is quite another. If the mere knowledge of what is right ensured the performance of duty, Lucifer would still be in heaven and never a priest would be languishing

in purgatory. It would be a measureless good to the clergy at large if a tithe of the advice which they professionally give to others were habitually acted upon by themselves, and particularly in this matter of personal devotion to Our Lady. On the other hand, it is an almost measureless ill that so many of us take it for granted that, because we talk or write eloquently or beautifully about Mary's greatness or glory and prestige and power, we actually possess that real and true devotion to her which alone will prove of genuine utility to us in our individual struggle against the enemies of our salvation, of powerful aid to us in overcoming the manifold obstacles to sacerdotal perfection.

It may be worth while to quote, just here, an illuminative paragraph written by a transatlantic priest for his clerical fellow-countrymen:—

To get the devotion to Mary which our lives require we must grow it ourselves, and when we have it we must cultivate it all our days. It will not do to take for granted our devotion to her, nor will it suffice to let it grow of itself. Weeds grow of themselves and grow apace; flowers need cultivating. . . . We must never forget, we priests in England, that we are born and nurtured, surrounded by an atmosphere of heresy. In it we live and move and have our being, we cannot escape it, we must always reckon with it, we must ever be on our guard lest it taint and affect our Catholic life. It is in a sad sense, but a most true, that we are not as the rest of men. Not to us is given the child's spontaneous love for its mother, Mary, content in the knowledge that where God has given honor we may give honor too without

fear; that where He has loved we may follow humbly, loving too. Is not ours sometimes a love which weighs its service and counts its acts? Love such as this, given grudgingly, and in scant weight and measure, is the fruit of Protestant surroundings. The atmosphere of heresy has infected us, and we, all Catholics though we be in faith, do not bring forth flowers like the sons of other lands. In Italy, in Spain, in Ireland, love of the Mother of God is drunk in by the little ones with their own mother's milk. The street corners tell the children of her power, the very hills proclaim her name; the niches, the wayside lamp, the rude inscriptions on their country-roads, all tell the same tale of a love strong as death, of a love almost born with them, the love of the children of the land for God's dear Mother.[1]

While religious conditions on this side of the Atlantic are not identical with those in England, they are sufficiently alike to render the foregoing reflections and warning of practical rather than purely academic interest to all of us. The prevalent attitude of the great bulk of non-Catholic Americans is not perhaps one of aggressive heresy so much as of virtual nothingarianism or religious indifferentism; but their reaction on ourselves is hardly less deleterious on that account. And that they do react more or less even on the clergy is scarcely questionable. Consciously, or unconsciously, we are all affected by the atmosphere by which we are surrounded. We can no more live in a non-Catholic or mixed community, converse habitually with non-Catholic friends and neighbors, read habitually non-Catholic books

[1] Canon Keatinge in *The Priest: His Character and Work.*

and papers, without being in some way affected by non-Catholic views and sentiments than we can travel a thousand miles on a railway train without having our clothes and person soiled with dust and soot. Imperceptibly, it may be, but none the less certainly, the indevotion of others tends to the gradual weakening of our own piety, unless we take positive means constantly to keep our devotion vivid, warm, and living.

One such means, available enough to our fellow-priests of an older day, is less called for in our time, save perhaps in certain environments,—vigorous defense against incessant attacks. One of the most striking facts in connection with the development of Catholic devotion to Our Lady that is constantly going on from decade to decade and century to century, is a notable diminution of the insistence with which the oldtime charge of Mariolatry is preferred against us by those outside the fold. It would seem that the more multiplied become the manifestations of our confiding love and engrossing veneration for our Mother Mary, the less do non-Catholics feel called upon to protest against our attributing to her powers and privileges inherent in Our Savior alone. Whether it be that the gross ignorance formerly displayed by our separated brethren as to Catholic doctrine concerning the Blessed Virgin is becoming dispelled in an appreciable measure, or that many of themselves have come to entertain sounder and more rational views as to Mary's place in the scheme of the world's redemption and sanctification, certain it is that Our Lady's

cult as the years go by evokes fewer and fewer tirades of abuse from those who are wont to boast of their freedom from the "superstitions of Rome."

The change is probably due in part to both these causes. No fairly educated Protestant, however inimical he may be to the Church and her tenets, will stultify himself nowadays by maintaining that we consider the Blessed Virgin equal or in any way comparable to God, or that we believe her other than entirely dependent on God for her existence, her privileges, her grace, and her glory. It is evident, also, that in at least one of the multitudinous sects the true Catholic idea of Our Lady is rapidly gaining ground, and that the adherents of that sect not only appreciate, but imitate, the strong and fervid expressions with which, in the impassioned ardor of genuine love, we sometimes address the immaculate Queen of Heaven.

Not that, even among the educated or in the ranks of the Anglican Ritualists, dissent has altogether died away or criticism been silenced. We are still accused of paying too lavish homage to the Virgin Mary, of dwelling too constantly on her privileges and of enhancing them beyond just bounds, of invoking her too assiduously, and of according to her in our public services and liturgical prayers titles befitting the Son rather than His Mother. We are told, in a word, that the prominence enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin in the liturgy of the Church and in the spiritual life of the Church's children is a prominence for which

neither Scripture nor apostolic tradition furnishes sufficient warrant.

It is obvious of course that those who make such statements can neither have studied Holy Writ to much purpose, nor have traced with anything approaching scientific accuracy the mighty stream of Marian devotion back to its origin and source. As all of us know, Scripture fairly teems with references to the grandeur and power and beauty of our Heavenly Mother,—from Genesis wherein Almighty God declares that she shall crush the serpent's head, to the Apocalypse with its eulogy of "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." In the Old Testament, the master-intellects of all time—a St. Augustine, a St. Thomas, a St. Bernard—have discerned the Virgin of Nazareth beneath reiterated figures and symbols, have seen her prerogatives and her glory shadowed forth in every chapter and on every page. As for the New Testament, no special superiority of intelligence is required to discover therein ample warrant for all the honor paid to Mary by even the most enthusiastic of her devotees; and it argues a positive perversion of ordinary common sense to assert that Our Lady's place in the Gospel is either insignificant or obscure.

For, after all, what does the Gospel tell us of Mary? We priests especially are familiar with the tale, but it will harm none of us to read its summary once again. The Gospel tells of a Virgin greeted by an Angel in the name of God, of

a maiden chosen from among all women and declared "full of grace," of a creature deliberating with the Creator concerning the salvation of the world and giving the consent awaited by Heaven and earth, "Be it done unto me according to thy word." The Gospel shows us a Virgin-Mother—virgin while becoming a mother, mother while remaining a virgin, perhaps the greatest of all prodigies effected by the Most High in His dealings with mankind. It shows us John the Baptist sanctified in his mother's womb on the occasion of Mary's visit: and shall we be told that Mary does not cooperate in the sanctification of souls? Or, having before our eyes the account of Our Lord's first miracle wrought at His Mother's request, shall we be censured for holding that Mary's prayers are most powerful? Finally, the inspired narrative of the Evangelists shows us Mary living for thirty years in daily and intimate intercourse with Jesus,—not only receiving His caresses, profiting by his instructions and example, drinking full draughts at the very source and fountain of grace, but also exercising authority over the Son of God, giving Him orders to which He was ever obedient—*et erat subditus illis.*

What panegyric is comparable to this simple recital? Or in what can we exalt our Blessed Mother more than she is exalted here? On the very face of it the Gospel attributes to Mary a glory congruous to no other created being, places her on a plane of immeasurable grandeur lower only than that whereon the Godhead reigns supreme. So, too, with tradition. So far as the

Apostles are concerned, we have in their Creed, or Symbol of faith, a more than sufficient reason for all the honor we pay Our Lady, if not for greater honor still. In that necessarily brief summary of Christian dogmas the Blessed Virgin and her place in the Divine economy are not left unnoticed. She is there, prominently there, associated with the three persons of the adorable Trinity, taking active part in the regeneration of mankind, sharing with God the Father the privilege of engendering the Word; because the Word, conceived eternally in the bosom of the Father, was conceived in time in the womb of Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," says the Apostles' Creed of Jesus Christ, affirming the two privileges to which our Blessed Mother owes all others, and justifying superabundantly the veneration due and given to her above every other created being on earth or in heaven.

As with the Apostles, so with all the Fathers of the Church in every century of the Christian era. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the theme of their most eloquent eulogies, the subject of their continuous praise and homage. Listen to St. Epiphanius, a bishop of the fourth century, when heretics would have us believe that Mary's cult had scarce begun:—"What shall I say," he begins, "or how shall I speak of the glorious and holy Virgin? God alone excepted, she is above all beings. More beautiful than the Cherubim and Seraphim and all the angelical army, an earthly voice or even that of an angel is too weak

fittingly to praise her. O Blessed Virgin, purest dove, celestial spouse, O Mary, heaven, temple, and throne of the Divinity, you possess the Sun which illumines heaven and earth, Jesus Christ. . . . The angels accused Eve, but now they glorify Mary who has rehabilitated fallen Eve and opened heaven to Adam expelled from Eden. For Mary is the mediatrix of heaven and earth, uniting these two extremes. . . ." And so on, in a strain of glowing panegyric unsurpassed by the most devoted servants of Our Lady in any subsequent age. Thus, in both the written and the unwritten Word of God, in Holy Scripture and Tradition, we have the fullest and most ample warrant for all we believe and teach concerning God's Immaculate Mother, and have moreover a steadfast guarantee that the devotion by which we honor her is acceptable and agreeable in the sight of her Incarnate Son.

No; there is nothing of Mariolatry about our attitude towards the Blessed Virgin, and one is almost tempted to add—more's the pity! It would assuredly be an excellent thing for many of us priests if our personal devotion to Our Lady were so pronounced and so fervent as to suggest that in our whole-hearted, childlike dependence on our heavenly Mother we were sinning by excess rather than defect. Given our clear and adequate comprehension of her real place in God's creation and her undoubted office in the economy of our own as well as the world's redemption and sanctification, it is well nigh impossible for us to increase our devotion to her beyond due bounds

and measure. Granted that we have long cherished some degree of such devotion, and that it daily finds expression in one or another of many modes, can not our love and invocation and imitation of Mary be safely practiced in a measure far fuller than that which they have yet attained?

Our love for Our Lady! Is it as deep, as tender, as intense as it ought to be and as we are capable of making it? She is our Mother, mother of us priests in a fuller sense than of the rest of men: it was to a priest that Christ directly said, "Son, behold thy mother;" and His omnipotent word constituted her all that is implied in that gracious name, the touching and universal synonym of goodness and gentleness and devotion and sacrifice. In virtue of her motherhood and our sonship, she is our refuge in misery, our unfailing help in time of need, our counselor in suffering, and our ceaseless advocate at the throne of Divine Justice. We love her, it may be; but is our love for her stronger than that for self, than our longing for fame or honor or wealth or ease? Do we love her to the extent of making genuine sacrifices for her sake, of manifesting ardent zeal for her devotion, of enkindling a similar love in the hearts of our people? Do we take especial pains to celebrate with all due solemnity her major festivals and her month-long feasts of May and October? Have we established her Sodality in our parish, and do we assiduously endeavor to gather our young people under her protecting mantle? Do we sufficiently often advocate in sermons, familiar instructions, and ordinary con-

versation the wearing of the Scapular and the recital of the Rosary? Nay, in our personal conduct, do we gain all the indulgences we reasonably can through these last-mentioned practices of piety? Or, rather, is not our love for Mary nebulous instead of well defined, inconstant in its expression, transient in its acts, ephemeral in its glow? If so, one of our most pressing duties and urgent needs is to intensify and fix in our hearts the flame of love for the Mother we have received from our great High Priest, to render it fuller and brighter than as yet it has shone, to feed it with thought and word and act until its beneficent light illumes and irradiates our whole existence.

We invoke our Mother every day; but is nothing wanting to the invocation? Is it as earnest, as fervent, as whole-souled as are the petitions of ordinary clients to earthly benefactors of whom they seek precious favors? as thoroughly confident as used to be our own entreaties to our loving natural mothers? Is it as frequent as, in view of our needs, our duties, our trials, and our temptations, it should be? Nay, are our prayers to the Blessed Virgin invariably real prayers, vivified with genuine intention and uttered with due advertence and heed to what we are saying; or are they not sometimes the mere recitations of a memory-lesson, almost as mechanical as the records of a phonograph? We are probably insistent enough in admonishing our parishioners as to qualities which their prayers should possess in order to be either reverent or effective: may we

not occasionally take to heart our own counsels and endue our petitions to Our Lady with an actuality, a force, an energy, and especially a confidence of which hitherto perhaps they have too often been devoid? Listless, half-hearted, perfunctory recital of the Beads, the Litany of Loretto, or other prayers to the Mother of God are so far from being, especially in a priest, adequate and laudable acts of piety, that one is tempted to call them an impertinence rather than a tribute of respect and homage.

Say what we will, and reason as we may, if our prayers to Mary are neither so frequent nor so fervent as in all conscience they should be, the lack is due to the fundamental defect that we fail to regard her in the congruous light of a personal mother, loving ourself individually with an affection immeasurably surpassing the most intense maternal love to be found on earth; and fail to behave towards her as a fond and frank and penitent child. Where is the little one in any household, rich or poor, who does not understand, who does not feel, who does not every day of its life and every hour of the day, act on the truth that a mother is one in whom to confide? What one of us that has ever been clasped to the loving bosom of that being who in our eyes was the most beautiful, the kindest, and the best of all earth's women,—that has had his childish tears kissed away by a mother's soothing lips, his boyish care dispelled by a mother's tender embrace, his youthful woes assuaged by a mother's gentle sympathy, can doubt for an instant that

a mother's love for her children is without measure, her desire to relieve them from all distress unbounded, and her wish to do them all good limited only by her power? This is what we all understand by that sweet word, mother, and this is undoubtedly what God desires us to understand of the Blessed Virgin, else Jesus had never said to St. John standing with Mary at the foot of the Cross: "Son, behold thy Mother."

Now, if Mary is indeed our Mother, she must be as perfect in that capacity as in every other. Since she is without exception the most richly endowed of all created beings that ever blessed earth or graced Heaven with her presence, she must likewise be the most loving, the kindest and sweetest and best mother ever looked up to and cherished and trusted by earthly child. It is accordingly nothing more than ordinary, practical Catholic common sense to have unbounded confidence in her willingness to exert in our behalf all her power, and, as we can hardly doubt, that power is all but unlimited. Priests as well as laymen, no doubt, should bear in mind St. Peter's warning: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour;" but it is the part of priestly wisdom to remember that there is interested in our salvation another personage more perfect than ever the devil was even before his fall, one who stands next the throne of God in Heaven and is immeasurably more anxious and more able to save us than is the devil to destroy. She is the Woman who of old crushed the ser-

pent's head and who still defeats, overthrows, and puts to disastrous rout the enemy of our souls.

To conclude with the thought with which we began: priests are seldom perhaps derelict in the duty of rendering due homage to Mary our Queen; but many of us, it is to be feared, are altogether too unlike little children in our personal devotion to Mary our Mother.

VIII

THE PRIEST'S VISITS

A CONFERENCE DISCUSSION

SOME two dozen priests, pastors and curates had assembled in the library of Dean Patterson's Parish Hall to attend the quarterly ecclesiastical conference. The *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* having been recited, and the minutes of the previous conference having been read and adopted, the Reverend Dean congratulated the members on the exceptionally large attendance. The only absentees were Father John Conlan, laid up in Mt. Carmel Hospital with a broken leg, and Father William Ellis, who had been summoned to the death-bed of his mother.

"The Bishop," continued the Dean, "will be particularly pleased to learn that we have all profited by the advice he gave us at our last retreat as to the genuine importance of these conferences, the necessity of every one's being present thereat, and the advisability of making them really worth while by carefully preparing and judiciously discussing the different papers assigned for each meeting. As for the thorough preparation given to the first of our papers to be read to-day, I need say no more than that the eminently practical subject, The Priest's Visits, has been entrusted to the venerable pastor of Maryville. Father Ferguson, you have the floor."

Father Ferguson:—Very Reverend Dean and Reverend Fathers: One of our privileges (or punishments) of advancing years is, I suppose, the liability to be called on for a display of that wisdom with which maturity is popularly believed to dower the man who has left the half-century mark of life more than a decade behind him, and is approaching all too rapidly for his own taste the scriptural limit of three score and ten. That the popular belief is not always correct, that wisdom does not invariably accompany grey hairs, most of you do not need to be told; and if any of my young friends, these curates here, do still cherish that belief, the present paper will, I fear, afford them convincing proof to the contrary.

Just why the paper has been assigned to me I don't know unless it be that my experience as curate in large parishes and small, as rural priest, and finally as city pastor, has been thought sufficiently varied to allow me to speak with some first-hand knowledge of the subject in its entirety, to read to you from the book of actual life a lesson or two on the duty and the pleasure, the advantages, and the occasional dangers, of priestly visiting. If, as the proverb has it, the warnings of age are the weapons of youth, such experience as I have gone through may possibly furnish you younger men with a few practical hints on which it may be worth your while to act as occasion offers; and in the improbable case that there are any among you so wise in your own conceit that you disdain the advice of your seniors,

you may profitably reflect on another proverb the truth of which is not so patent to you now as it will be later on: "Young men think old men are fools, and old men know young men to be so."

At the outset, let me say that I do not purpose discussing what is perhaps the commonest form of a priest's visiting, the sick-call. Apart from the fact that we listened a few months ago to Father Riordan's excellent paper on "The Priest and His Sick," there is less danger perhaps of our going astray or making mistakes in that form of visit than in most others; and in any case the others will afford us matter enough for discussion this afternoon. I have known in my time priests who maintained that the sick-call is the only visit really obligatory on a pastor, and that the "well-call," his visiting parishioners or others not sick or afflicted, is a purely social function independent of his pastoral duty, and amenable only to his individual, personal preference and inclination. Now, that contention can hardly be made good. Waiving such finer points of the matter as might be involved in the question whether or not a parish has been canonically erected, it appears to me that the position is quite untenable because it conflicts with the whole conception and import of the pastoral idea.

In the opinion of his people, and in the mind of the Church as well, the pastor is the spiritual father of his flock, and it is obviously incompatible with one's notion of genuinely paternal care and love for him to hold himself aloof from that flock, or to limit his intercourse with them,

outside of church services, sodality meetings, etc., to those occasions on which he is sent for to attend the sick or the dying. Fatherly interest is, and ought to be, displayed in a multiplicity of other conjunctures and circumstances; and the priest who is desirous of doing his full duty to those entrusted to his spiritual care and guidance may well feel that sick-calls, in the strict sense of that phrase, should be the least frequent of his visits to his parishioners. I say sick-calls in the strict sense of the word, for it is susceptible of a far broader signification than that commonly assigned to it. The sickest members of a pastor's flock are not always, or even generally, those who are confined to the sick-room, bed-ridden, the prey to bodily disease, and who solicit the presence of their spiritual father: but rather those who are dangerously ill, far advanced, in maladies of the soul, and who have no thought of calling for the priest and no desire to see and converse with him about the ailments for which he is the appointed physician. To leave such members of his flock to themselves, to make no effort towards awakening them to a sense of their perilous condition, to remain unconcerned as to their temporal and eternal welfare, is very surely to act in a manner diametrically opposed to that of our model priest, Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who gave his life for his flock.

Nor does it avail to say that one performs one's whole duty in this matter when one is faithful in preaching frequently and fervently on the delay of conversion, on the eternal truths, on death

and the necessity of being prepared therefor. Such preaching is excellent, no doubt; but it not infrequently happens that those who need it most do not hear it at all. One not uncommon result of spiritual illness is the neglect of the Mass, or, at least of the last Mass, at which these sermons are usually given. Personal contact with the careless, the fallen-away, the ought-to-be Catholic is the only practicable method by which the priest may hope to bring about, gradually it may be and very slowly, the reform of his erring spiritual child; and a truly zealous pastor will submit to many a rebuff, many an unpleasant interview, many an affront even, before telling himself that he has done all in his power to win the obstinate sinner back to God. Unvarying kindness, cordial interest shown in the "black sheep's" children, a word in season slipped into an ordinary chat on topics of the day, constant prayer for his conversion,—these and the like means will be found most commonly to be eventually effective in bringing the unfaithful son of the Church to a recognition of his danger and to a return to his duty.

Apart from these sick-calls in the wider sense, there are of course other visits which are quasi-pastoral rather than purely social. In some dioceses it is customary for each pastor to take a yearly census of his parish, personally visiting every family committed to his spiritual charge; and, so far as my experience goes, I am inclined to think the custom a thoroughly good one. It ensures at any rate an annual individual en-

counter of priest and people, a consummation devoutly to be wished but not always achieved in parishes where the custom does not exist. Replacing, or supplementing, such yearly visits are the calls paid on any one of a score of different occasions in the routine of ordinary life,—occasions of joy or sorrow, of good or bad fortune, of averted danger and preservation from accidents, of honor won or courage displayed, of gladsome or saddening anniversaries, and others equally freighted with vibrant emotion. The visit of the pastor on such an occasion is not only thoroughly congruous; it is little less than obligatory in one who is called by the tender name of "Father."

Come we now to social visits pure and simple, visits that we pay, not as pastors, but as friends or acquaintances, visits the determining motive of which is, not the spiritual assistance or edification of those on whom we call, but the gratification of our own personal tastes and inclinations. It need hardly be said that such visits are *per se* perfectly legitimate. Only an unduly severe and rigorous censor of the clergy would think of condemning them as derogatory to priestly dignity or destructive of priestly piety. That they are liable to abuse (peculiarly liable in the estimation of some clerical counsellors), is a condition which they share with a large number of other excellent things, and does not constitute a valid reason for their condemnation. After all, priests are men, not angels; and social intercourse with their fellow human beings, lay as well as

clerical, may be a very helpful means of keeping them in that intellectual and spiritual sanity which is most propitious for the effective discharge of their multifarious duties. Friendships are certainly not tabooed in the sacerdotal life any more than in the ordinary Christian one; and yet, as we all know, "particular friendships" are condemned in the rules of all religious institutes. Now, while we are not religious, we may easily do worse in this matter than look upon our parish as our monastery or convent, and treat our parishioners as the exemplary monk treats his brethren, showing affection for all rather than notable liking for some and a scarcely concealed aversion to others.

Whom shall we visit and how often, are questions which are well worth thinking about and may very properly be discussed in such a conference as this. As to the first question, concerning the recipients of our visits, my personal opinion coincides with that of those who hold that a pastor's social calls should be made on all his parishioners—or none. As a general rule, subject of course to the occasional exceptions from which no rule is exempt, that, it appears to me, is a safe and sane standard or norm by which a judicious cleric may profitably regulate his conduct. Theoretically, the rule admits of an alternative, all or none; but as in actual practice there are few, if any, priests so self-centered or so hermit-like that they visit nobody, the rule means for working purposes that our calls should be paid in more or less regular rotation on all the members of

our parish. That something can be said for the dissenting opinion which holds that a pastor has an undeniable right to visit only such of his flock as are congenial to him in qualities of mind and heart, I am quite willing to concede; but, granting the asserted right, I seriously question the expediency of exercising it. Comparatively few years in the active ministry, and relatively slight experience with priests and people, sufficed to convince me, long years ago, that the pastor who visits at brief intervals two or three of his families, and rarely if ever enters the homes of the remaining members of his flock, is not only opening the door to a flood of disparaging criticism and introducing an element of discord into his parish, but is notably lessening his own efficiency for the work he has to do. Jealousy is a weed of speedy growth even in uncongenial soil, and where the soil is, as it were, prepared by the discrimination or favoritism of the pastor, the weed is bound to develop a growth as luxuriant as it is noxious. Needless to say, if the priest restricts his visiting to a single household some of whose members are young people of the other sex, his conduct, entirely proper and aboveboard as it may be, will almost inevitably be made the topic of criticism of a kind to which he cannot afford to lend the slightest color or excuse.

It may perhaps be considered superfluous to counsel avoidance of any distinction, in our visits, between the poor and the well-to-do. Just as, according to Ecclesiastes, "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,"

so, it would seem, the pastor who is in very truth a good shepherd will be scrupulous perhaps in manifesting greater interest in the less, than in the more, fortunate members of his flock. In view of what I have sometimes seen, however, I am tempted to advise on this point: "Don't neglect the rich." The ordinary instincts of a gentleman, to say nothing of the fatherly sentiment of a pastor, should suffice to keep a priest up to the mark in his attentions to the poorer people of his parish; and, on the whole, he is safer perhaps in visiting them more, instead of less, frequently than the wealthier families under his pastoral care. Yet there is an extreme to be avoided. In the thoroughly intelligible desire not to appear a sycophant, a toady, or a parasite, it is quite possible "to lean over backwards" and treat the rich with an exaggerated independence and exclusiveness that is practically equivalent to a boycott. That is of course an abuse. The rich have quite as much right, and not infrequently have fully as much need, of their pastor's visits as have the poor; and the judicious parish priest will pay his visits impartially to both.

These, Very Reverend Dean and Reverend Fathers, are some aspects of the subject confided to me on which I have thought it well to insist. Other phases of the subject will doubtless be brought up in the discussion which is to follow. Not to defer that discussion any longer, let me conclude with a wise word from the *Imitation,* a word applicable especially in the case of our purely social visits: "It is easier to keep retired

at home than to be able to be sufficiently on our guard abroad."

The Dean:—The specific commentators or critics appointed to discuss the excellent paper to which we have just listened are Fathers Downey and Harris, both of whom I see present. Father Downey, we shall be pleased to hear from you.

Father Downey:—I presume my first duty is to congratulate the author of the paper on his avoidance of a fault of which we have had occasional instances in these conferences of ours, and which is commonly supposed to be an attribute of the old age he bears so gracefully, prolixity. The average listener to his paper is far more likely to say, "'Twas very good, what there was of it," than "'Twas long enough, such as it was." Personally I could have wished him to be considerably longer, in which case he would undoubtedly have touched on some points of which he said nothing, and dwelt a little more fully on one or two which he did mention.

He might, for instance, have animadverted at greater length on the very real, if not always realized, dangers attendant on unofficial, non-pastoral visits to women. The truth that we are men, not angels, may well be seasoned in this connection with the proverbial dictum that, "Man is fire and woman is tow and the devil comes and blows." It is all very well to insist that our office as pastors imposes on us duties which preclude our exercising such avoidance of the other sex as is recommended by many of the oldtime saints; but it is worth while to remember that the world is not

less seductive, the flesh less weak, or the devil less aggressive nowadays than when St. Paul complained of the *stimulus carnis.* No doubt the grace of God will suffice for us as it did for him, if we are equally prompt and faithful in corresponding to it; yet it is manifest that we have more right to count on a copious supply of that grace when we are acquitting ourselves of pastoral, or quasi-pastoral, duties than when we are merely satisfying our inclination for social intercourse. Young clerics, especially, will do well to be circumspect in their attitude towards the women, and more particularly the girls, of their congregation.

As for the general principle laid down by Father Ferguson, that of visiting all or none of one's parishioners—and all rather than none—I both agree with it in theory and act upon it in practice. At the same time I must say that I have known very excellent priests who adopted the "none" side of the question, paying no purely social visits whatever. The personal equation must necessarily count for much in determining one's practice in this respect. One priest is by nature and temperament sociable, genial, adaptable, a "good mixer," as we are accustomed to characterize him; and *he* may well visit all his people. Another is of a retiring, reserved, unimpressionable, or apathetic disposition; and his perfunctory calls upon his various families are productive of restraint and ceremonious awkwardness rather than genuine pleasure to the families or himself. No one likes to play the role of

a wet blanket, and I can readily understand why some good priests entirely eliminate the social visit from their personal practice.

There are one or two other matters on which I could say a few words; but they will probably be mentioned by my fellow-critic or some other member of the Conference; so, beyond congratulating Father Ferguson on his judicious treatment of the general subject, I need say no more.

The Dean:—Father Harris, your observations are now in order. As one of the younger clergy, representing the curates in a manner, you will, I feel assured, be listened to with interest and pleasure.

Father Harris:—I'm inclined to think, Mr. Chairman, that I might plead my comparative youth and inexperience as a reason for not taking any part save that of a listener in this discussion. It can hardly be expected that we curates can add anything of practical utility to the elucidation of a subject so ably treated by our seniors who have already spoken. If I were to offer any suggestion at all to our elders among the clergy as to the matter of social visiting by their juniors, it would be that a good many of what a pastor may consider the superfluous visits of his curate could be done away with if the pastor took a really fatherly interest in that curate and endeavored to make his home life pleasant and genial. While my own lot during my eight years as assistant has been a happy one in this respect, I know fellow-curates who spend much, perhaps too much, of their time with lay friends

for the same reason that some husbands pass a good part of their spare time in clubs or saloons, —the unattractiveness of their home life. Young men need sympathy more than do their elders, and if they don't find it in the rectory they are very apt to look for it elsewhere. This craving for sympathy is another point as to which priests, and particularly young priests, are men rather than angels; and I am of the opinion that, if some exemplary pastors would look at the matter from their assistants' viewpoint, and take a little trouble to dissipate the loneliness or discouragement to which the assistants may occasionally be subject, there would be an improved atmosphere in the rectory, and fewer useless, not to say dangerous, visits paid to parishioners.

If I may be permitted to proffer a bit of advice to those of my own age, I should counsel them to visit not only all the families of the parish, but all the members of each separate family,—father, mother, and the younger children, as well as Grace, or Kate, or Mary Ellen. Brief as has been my personal experience it has sufficed to convince me that a good-looking young priest, especially if he be a fine singer or a skilled pianist, needs an exceptional amount of the circumspection counselled by Father Downey. And the undoubted piety of the girls whom he meets in his round of visits is no guarantee that an intercourse, begun perhaps by a conversation about spiritual matters, will not eventually degenerate into an intimacy so devoid of spirituality that it is wholly "of the earth, earthy." Those of us whose

physical comeliness is, like my own, conspicuously non-existent, may thank our stars, or our plain-featured forbears, that we have fewer temptations to surmount than have some of our handsome fellow-priests. Let me say in conclusion that I enjoyed Father Ferguson's paper very much, and hope to profit by its wise counsels.

The Dean:—The appointed commentators having spoken, the question is now open for discussion by any member of the Conference. I shall be pleased to hear from any one who has suggestions to make or questions to ask.

Father Moran:—I should like, Mr. Chairman, to hear Father Ferguson's opinion on the proper priestly practice as regards visiting two categories of friends,—one's brother-priests, and Sisters.

Father Ferguson:—As for one's fellow-priests, I think that, as a rule, once a week is not too often, and once a month is not often enough. Apart from considerations of warm friendship, congeniality of tastes, etc., one should bear in mind that a visit paid to a neigboring pastor or curate is very often a veritable act of charity worth a good deal more to the recipient than the visitor may ever realize. With regards to Sisters, my own practice with the dozen devoted religious who teach in my school is to pay them a friendly call in their recreation-room once a week, if at all possible. I like to think that my presence among them is welcomed and that the interest I show in their work and my appreciation of their self-sacrifice constitute one of the very few pleasures available to them in their unworldly lives. So

far as visits to particular Sisters are concerned, their rules very generally prohibit the *solus cum sola* interview; and where exceptional cases occur, it is a wise plan, to my mind, to make the call a brief one, and while it lasts to do and say nothing that would render incongruous the Sister's asking at its close: "Pray, give me your blessing, Father."

Father Doyle:—While I quite agree with the last speaker in his estimate of our Sisters in general, and while I have no doubt that the Purgatory of the least perfect among them will be considerably briefer than my own, I think it is worth while to remark that Sisters, no more than priests, are angels. They themselves would be the first to acknowledge that they are subject to human frailties, and to deprecate the notion that they have already attained the perfection towards which they are merely tending. Now, one of the points as to which an occasional Sister, or, better, an exceptional Reverend Mother, shows herself to be thoroughly human is her failure to recognize the fact that her position, exalted as it may be in her community, is emphatically and radically inferior to that of the youngest and least brilliant of God's anointed priests. We older men have personally known one or two such Mothers who, while perfectly willing in the abstract to admit with St. Theresa that, as between an angel and a priest, the latter merits the greater reverence, nevertheless in their concrete treatment of some younger members of the clergy assumed an attitude of superiority and condescen-

sion that would have been out of place even in an archbishop or a cardinal.

I mention the matter simply to emphasize the admirable sanity of another Reverend Mother, a typical religious Superioress, who caused to be printed and distributed among her subjects a striking paragraph from a sermon on the dignity of the priest,—a paragraph which contains a lesson for all of us in connection with our general demeanor when visiting. I have a copy of the clipping in my breviary here, and with your presumed permission I purpose reading it:—

"'O wondrous dignity of priests, in whose hands the Son of God is incarnated,' says St. Cyprian. Wondrous, indeed, my dear brethren; and, if dignity is to be gauged by the nature and extent of the power of which it is the concomitant, where on earth, let me ask, is to be found a dignitary so exalted as is the humblest and lowliest recipient of Holy Orders? If you ever visit a great mountain range—the Alps, the Appenines, the Alleghenies, or the Rockies—you will see 'Alps on Alps arise,' peak towering above peak in long succession till the snow-clad summit of the topmost is lost far up in the environing clouds. The altitudes of these peaks vary one from another by some hundreds of feet; but the least lofty of them is thousands of feet higher than the minor elevations that form the foothills at their base, or than the mounds and hillocks that break the dead-level of the plain. So with the range of dignities attainable on earth. Kings and queens, emperors and presidents; commanders-in-chief and generals of armies, admirals and commodores of navies; financial, political, literary, and social magnates; Brother-Generals and Mother-Generals

of the greatest religious communities,—all these are higher indeed than people on the level plain of ordinary life, but they are merely foothills to the priests and bishops and archbishops who tower above them in increasing altitudes till the culminating summit is reached in the Pope, the immediate Vicar of Jesus Christ. In the matter of dignity, the Pope differs from the simple priest as mountain-peak from mountain-peak; the simple priest differs from the greatest mortal not in Holy Orders as mountain-peak from the foothills far below."

That, I think, is something for us to remember habitually in our intercourse with others, be they brother-priests, Sisters, or the laity committed to our spiritual charge.

The Dean:—An excellent comment, Father Doyle, and an appropriate last word in this interesting discussion. I trust that we shall all carry away with us an intensified resolve never to compromise, in any degree, by the number, the nature, or the circumstances of our visits, the priestly dignity with which we have all been invested.

IX

THE PRIEST IN THE SICK-ROOM

Be not slow to visit the sick: for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love.—*Ecclus. vii, 39.*

It is by my own pains, sufferings, and infirmities that the Lord has been pleased to make me sympathize with the sick and practice patience and charity towards them.—*St. Frances de Chantal.*

Who knows if sudden death and privation of the Last Sacraments may not be for many priests the punishment reserved, in the judgment of God, for lack of zeal in attending the sick.—*Rev. M. Müller, C. SS. R.*

SINCE the supreme moment of life is its last one, and the supreme need of the departing soul is the assurance that it is in the grace of God, the supreme function of the pastor may well be considered by his spiritual children to be his administering the Last Sacraments and helping the dying to die well. The death of an unbaptized infant is rightly looked upon as a sad misfortune, but that of an unabsolved adult may be an incomparably sadder one. The child will at least enjoy natural happiness throughout the endless cycles of eternity; the adult may be doomed to spend those cycles in the woeful abode of the reprobate. Even in the case of a good, practical Catholic, to die without receiving the graces and helps and consolations which the Church has appointed for her departing children is deemed an irreparable hardship; and, while it is right and wise to comfort the surviving relatives with the assurance of God's infinite mercy, and to ex-

patiate on the obvious meaning of the text, "As a man lives, so shall he die," the pastor whose neglect has been the cause of the hardship can scarcely fail to say to himself: "Yes, 'as a man lives, so shall he die;' this child of the Church lived in the regular reception of her sacraments, and woe unto me through whose fault he died without them!"

In prefacing what we have to say about the priest in the sick-room with the foregoing considerations, we have no intention whatever of suggesting that neglecting the sick and allowing one's parishioners to die without the sacraments is at all common or other than quite exceptional. We merely wish to emphasize at the outset the major importance of a priestly duty which, as it is an ordinary, almost everyday, occurrence, may possibly become in the course of time affected by the routinism to be guarded against in the performance of all functions habitually exercised. To assert indeed that the Catholic sick are commonly or even frequently neglected by their pastors would be not only glaringly to misrepresent actual conditions, but to run counter to the common opinion of the world at large, Catholic and non-Catholic. The care and solicitude and devotedness and, on occasion, the heroism displayed by the priest in attending to the sick or dying members of his flock,—this is a commonplace of conversation and of literature in these United States, as in every other country where due heed is taken of the counsel of St. James: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests

of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (v. 14, 15). To state that here and there throughout the country may be found occasional pastors who are more or less remiss in the matter of sick-calls, and even a few whose remissness has actually brought about the catastrophe of death without the sacraments, is merely to note the exceptions to a rule very generally prevailing; and the more seriously the average pastor reflects on the disastrous consequences of such remissness to himself as well as others, the less likelihood will there be of his becoming yet another exception to the rule.

It is perhaps an obvious reflection to make on this subject, that very much of the work of sick-calls may be, and should be, performed long prior to the actual summons to the sick-room. If there be anything of wisdom in the advice, "In time of peace prepare for war," there is assuredly still more good sense in the counsel, "In time of health prepare for sickness." Even as regards the material preparation of the sick-room for the administration of Extreme Unction, the pastor who assumes that all his people are thoroughly conversant with the various details of that preparation is very probably taking altogether too much fór granted. In the course of his instructions on Extreme Unction, given, presumably, at least once a year, he need not consider it at all superfluous to inform his flock that in the chamber where the

sacrament is to be administered there should be a table covered with a white linen cloth and having upon it a crucifix, two lighted candles, a bowl or other dish containing holy water, a twig or other instrument with which the priest may sprinkle both the room and the bystanders, another dish containing unblessed water, a towel, and some cotton wool. It is a great deal better to reiterate these detailed instructions from time to time in the pulpit or from the altar than to be obliged to give them just prior to administering the sacrament and then to wait until they are carried out.

As for the remote spiritual preparation, this, too, can be effectively attended to in plain sermons or catechetical instructions. The man or woman who has heard time and time again of the folly and the danger of postponing the reception of Extreme Unction until too late for the sacrament to produce its full effect; who has been frequently impressed by the consideration that, when received in due time, the sacrament not infrequently restores the bodily health; who has been repeatedly warned that in case of serious illness the presence of the spiritual physician is immeasurably more necessary than that of the family doctor,—such a man or woman is far more likely to act on the principle, "soul-safety first," than is the average Catholic who, from year's end to year's end, never hears a word on the pre-eminent importance of the immediate preparation for death. Apart from specific instructions on the last sacraments, occasional sermons on the

eternal truths are also of immense help in facilitating the pastor's work in his actual ministrations to the sick and the dying. Let it be added, incidentally, that, as a rule, insistence on these terrifying truths may more congruously characterize the priest's sermons in church than his instructions at the death-bed. It is tolerably safe to suppose that the devil will not fail to suggest to the dying Christian every consideration calculated to make him despair of God's mercy: the pastor's office is to thwart satan's designs and to set forth the infinitude of goodness resident in that Heavenly Father who wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. There may of course be cases in which the attitude of the dying person is more nearly allied to presumption than to despair; and then, reference to the enormity of sin and the dread consequences of unrepented sin may well find its place.

In the large sense, it need scarcely be stated, all the sermons and instructions of the pastor, as well as all his activities in cultivating the spirituality of his flock,—his organizing sodalities and confraternities, his fostering special devotions, his promotion of attendance at daily Mass and frequent or daily Communion, etc.—are in reality a series of remote preparations for the last hour of each and every parishioner's life; and, obviously, the more multiplied are these activities and the more zeal he evinces in persuading his people to subordinate the natural to the supernatural and live by faith rather than by sight, the less difficulty will he experience in getting them to pre-

serve the proper attitude and take the proper precautions in time of sickness, and the more blessed will be his ministration when the sickness becomes mortal. It is axiomatic indeed that the most consoling and most adequately effective sick-calls are those made by a thoroughly pious and zealous pastor on spiritual children who have learned to reverence and love him as a veritable father, a priest after Christ's own heart. The better the priest and the more efficient his general ministry, the easier his sick-calls.

To turn to the more practical and concrete side of the priest's attendance on his sick: to begin with, if he is to do them full justice, his services must be attainable whenever they are needed; and, as they may be needed at any time, it follows that at all times the pastor should be accessible, gettable, or, as the modern locution has it, get-at-able. An obvious corollary of this principle is that the pastor is bound in conscience not to leave his parish for an unknown destination without previously arranging with some brother priest that the latter will attend to such calls as may occur during his absence, and without notifying his parishioners of the arrangements made. To the neglect of this self-evidently wise precaution is beyond doubt due the greater number of such deaths without the sacraments as do occur from time to time. The occurrence of even one of them among his flock should serve as an entirely effective warning to any pastor not to run the risk of letting so deplorable an event happen again through any negligence on his part; and

should accordingly either lessen the number of his absences from home or ensure his replacement by another priest. To object that, after all, a pastor is not a slave or a prisoner to be restricted to the narrow confines of his pastoral district, is clearly to beg the question. He is a pastor, not for his own benefit or comfort, but for the service of his flock; attendance on them in their spiritual need is the very *raison d'être* of his being a pastor at all; and no flippant ignoring of his duty towards them will avail to rid him of his responsibility before God, or, presumably, excuse him in the eyes of his ordinary.

Even when at home, however, not all pastors are so readily accessible as they might well show themselves to be. Housekeepers of priests, whether coached for the purpose or not, are occasionally prone to minimize the seriousness of a sick-call that comes at a time when the priest is enjoying a meal or a smoke or a siesta, and take it upon themselves to postpone notifying him of the call until he is quite disengaged. As is evident, such action may readily result in the pastor's arriving in the sick-room too late to be of genuine service. While it is doubtless true that many a call upon the priest exposes him to inconvenience and fatigue and broken sleep without the slightest real necessity, it is equally true that the judicious pastor never assumes that because nine sick-calls have proven to be unnecessary, the tenth can safely be allowed to wait upon his greater convenience. Present discomfort may be acute, but it is a good deal more bearable than

the future remorse that may well result from the discomfort's being avoided.

It is nothing to the credit of a pastor that an ailing member of his flock, on being urged to "send for the priest," can truthfully allege as a reason for declining to do so: "You know how Father Blank dislikes to be called unless there is real necessity." The more lax and negligent among Catholics, and hence those who have most need of their pastor's ministrations, are precisely those who are least willing to admit the gravity of their illness; and it would be supremely regrettable if that pastor's well-known impatience and irritability and ill-humor at being summoned to cases not really dangerous should give some color of reason to their refusal to have him called in. As between undue hastiness and inordinate delay in sending for the priest, the former is assuredly the lesser evil; and an exemplary father of souls will be chary of showing that he considers it an evil at all. Many a priest who is striving heroically to imbue his indifferent people with the true religious sense would be only too happy to have them instinctively turn to him whenever the hand of sickness or pain arrests, or deflects, the normal tenor of their careless lives.

As a matter of actual practice, truly zealous and devoted parish priests are so far from objecting to the frequency with which they are summoned to the sick-room that they habitually make their appearance there of their own initiative, without waiting for a summons. And, given that a priest in charge of souls is really their spiritual

father, it can hardly be urged that such action is at all abnormal or strange. He would indeed be rather an abnormal father were he to act otherwise. In ordinary Christian households the father of the family assuredly does not wait until one of his children is in danger of death before paying it a visit and testifying his love and sympathy; and surely Catholics who habitually call their pastor "Father" may reasonably expect from him some measure of the like paternal solicitude and care. We have sometimes thought that a not undesirable feature of a man's training for the office of pastor might well be a sickness almost unto death. Personal experience of the pain and languor and weakness and weariness that accompany serious illness would beyond doubt prove an excellent preparative for one of his most common and most important pastoral functions. Wanting such experience, he should at least exercise his imagination to the extent of following the homely advice, "put yourself in his place." His doing so would materially affect both the frequency of his visits to the afflicted ones of his flock and the tenor of his conduct and conversation when sitting by their bedside.

Apropos of sympathy for the sick, it is scarcely too much to say that in our day some of those who have most need of it get little or none, even from their well-meaning pastors. Within the last few decades nervous diseases in an ever-increasing variety of forms have become alarmingly common, and outside of the medical profession are very little understood. In all probability the mis-

take of diagnosing all neurasthenics as hypochondriacs, a custom rather general even among physicians thirty or forty years ago, is still made by the majority of such priests as are unfamiliar with works on pastoral medicine; and the mistake may work sad havoc in the spiritual life of the nervously afflicted. Father Anselm Ricker, O.S.B., puts the matter mildly when he says, in his "Pastoral Psychiatry": "A priest who has gained psychiatric knowledge will be kind and prudent in dealing with the mentally afflicted, and will save many a man [and, *a fortiori,* many a woman] from great misfortune." So, too, Dr. A. E. Sanford, in his "Pastoral Medicine": "That a knowledge of morbid conditions growing out of neurasthenia is highly valuable not only to the physician, but also to the educator, teacher, lawyer, and not in the lowest degree to the priest, goes without saying." There are unfortunately spiritual as well as material pills, of the prescription of which one may say, with Felix Holt in one of George Eliot's novels, "Ignorance is not so damnable as humbug, but when it prescribes pills it may happen to do more harm."

The inference to be drawn from the foregoing is not, of course, that the ordinary priest should possess all the knowledge congruous to a competent physician; but rather that he should either make some study of pastoral medicine, or else show exceptional kindness and patience with such of his sick as suffer from mental troubles which he cannot understand. It is pertinent to add that what the Church forbids to her clergy in this mat-

ter is the *practice* of medicine, not its knowledge. The fact is that, without at least *some* medical knowledge, various problems of moral theology cannot be adequately solved; and hence medico-theological subjects are discussed with reasonable thoroughness in many seminaries, not to say all of them. As regards mental maladies, however, medical science has made many strides since the middle-aged reader of this page completed his seminary course; and if he has not supplemented that course by subsequent study or reading on the various forms of neurosis, he probably lacks the full equipment of a thoroughly competent confessor and a prudent adviser of some at least of his sick. The subject is so practical, and withal so interesting, that we make no apology for quoting here several lengthy passages dealing therewith.

Speaking of the mental suffering to be found in compulsory thoughts, compulsory notions, and compulsory conditions in general, Dr. Sanford says:

"Hansjakob, a German author, has forcefully described the power exercised by the compulsory images over the morbidly irritable soul. We may believe what he tells of it in his book, 'Days of Sickness,' for he is relating his own personal experience: 'Let him who has never been afflicted with compulsory notions thank God and his good nerves for not knowing these furies, against whom will and reason are equally powerless. Compulsory notions are for soul and mind what lashes are for the body, only lashes are as balm compared with those illusions, because mental suf-

ferings, mental tortures are in general more hurtful and tantalizing than physical pains.'

"Of course, he who has never had occasion to observe this ailment in its entire depth and broadness, and to watch it in its course, will be readily at hand with judgment that can only be wrong, or with advice that fails to help. At best the uninitiated will counsel the afflicted to try to banish those stupid, silly, ridiculous thoughts. The unfeeling ignoramus will make the cutting remark, 'That man is crazy and ought to be in an asylum.' Another will find it incomprehensible why those thoughts, together with the impulse they give to perverse actions, might not be overcome by exerting the will-power. The well-meaning spiritual adviser who, though well-meaning, is unacquainted with this condition, will say, perhaps, 'These are nothing but temptations and distractions, which ought to be despised.' The latter view is the more readily formed, because these compulsory notions often present themselves in the false garb of temptations, and prove the more irritating, confusing, and alarming the more they concern themselves with vital questions of religious life and the more they harass moral notions."

Such language as this, coming from a physician of acknowledged competency and prestige, may well give pause to the inconsiderate clergyman who disposes of all such cases with the oracular, if offhand, remark that a little common sense is all that is needed in treating them. He will best display his common sense by distrusting his ability to diagnose such cases correctly, and by consulting authoritative works dealing with neurosis and its multifarious ramifica-

tions. One such work with which the reader is possibly unacquainted was published, with the Westminster *imprimatur*, two or three years ago, "Spiritual Director and Physician." It is a translation, by Dom Aloysius Smith, C.R.L., from the French of Father V. Raymond, O.P., and deals with the spiritual treatment of sufferers from nerves and scruples. A circumstance which gives notable value to the work is that its author knows at first hand whereof he speaks. Dr. Masquin testifies: "When I first met Father Raymond in Germany, he was in a most critical state of neurosis, and he is consequently well able to understand the physical and moral torture which fills with despair those unfortunate people who are so affected." Apart from his personal experience, Father Raymond, as chaplain to the Kneipp Institute at Woerishofen (Bavaria) for a decade and a half of years, has received the confidences of thousands of nervous patients who have traveled from all parts of the world to take the Woerishofen treatment. Obviously, therefore, he is fairly competent to discuss nervous ailments with something more than a dilettante's sciolism; and it is not extravagant to affirm that the average confessor or spiritual director will learn something new from an attentive perusal of his pages,—something new and thoroughly useful as well.

One declaration of this Dominican priest-physician it may be worth while to reproduce, as it is really of wider scope than he assigns to it: "It may be said that if psychotherapy is the basis

of the correct treatment of neurosis, kindness is the basis of psychotherapy. It holds the place of humility among the virtues; it is the foundation, and as there is no real virtue without humility, neither is there any system of treatment of these ailments without kindness." That principle may very properly be acted upon by a pastor in all sorts of sickness, whether of mind or body. Kindness is the one quasi-remedy with which we may all, be our medical knowledge great or little, bring solace to the sufferers whom it is our duty to attend. Kindness in visiting them frequently, gentleness and patience in supporting their ofttimes wayward humors, unfailing tenderness in winning them to resignation to the holy will of God, and an unmistakable desire to do them all the good in our power,—this is within the competency of every pastor and should surely characterize them all. It is well-nigh superfluous to add that virtue is never more manifestly its own reward than in the case of priestly kindness to the sick. It is the experience of all who have reached middle life or old age that this specific form of charity does indeed cover a multitude of sins. Manifold as may be a pastor's imperfections,—harshness, impatience, irritability, or other faults of temper in the ordinary affairs of life; an autocratic or domineering spirit in the government of his parish; partiality or favoritism in his treatment of his flock; continual nagging about money; want of punctuality in keeping church or social appointments; unbusinesslike habits; or even unpriestly fondness for comforts

and luxuries,—all these are apparently offset and compensated for if it can truthfully be said of him: "Well, there's one thing about Father X: no priest could possibly be kinder than he is to his sick."

To revert for a moment to the nervously affected, here is an interesting and somewhat surprising statement from Dr. Beard, a specialist in neurasthenia:

"Nervous weakness is found under an appearance of perfect health. Patients get very little sympathy on account of their irritability, the changeableness and various aspects of their symptoms. Sometimes they look well and show plenty of activity: their appearance is healthy, robust, and vigorous. It may be that they grow stout, whilst their nervous trouble grows more serious. They are known to increase in weight whilst all trouble of the digestive organs changes to an affliction of the brain or the spine. These changes deceive everybody, including the doctor, and just when they need most sympathy they get the least. A doctor who once came to visit me happened to pass through the patients' waiting-room and remarked that all my patients looked like giants. As a matter of fact, I then had some serious cases of nervous prostration. It cannot be too often repeated: a man may be of robust constitution and yet his nervous system may be as weak as that of an hysterical girl who is always on her sick-bed."[1]

Is it too much to say that such statements as this may well determine confessors and priestly visitors of the sick to be slow in deciding that

[1] *Spiritual Director and Physician*, p. 306.

the ills of some of their penitents are purely imaginary? Fuller knowledge of nervous maladies would probably result in an increase of priestly kindness and sympathy, and a consequent notable amelioration in the condition of the sufferers.

Another matter which is of the utmost practicality to parish priests, and about which there has been some change in the opinions of sound theologians of late years, is the question of real life and apparent death. Just when life actually ceases and death actually supervenes is obviously a matter of prime importance to the priest who attends sick-calls, because, according to the common opinion of Catholic moralists, the slightest probability of the presence of life warrants the administering of the sacraments to a dying person. The basis of the opinion is of course that the probability of life means the possibility of being saved, and the moribund has a right to what is necessary for salvation. It is a case in which one may safely act on the theological adage, *Sacramenta sunt propter homines, non homines propter sacramenta.* Now, ever since the Spanish Jesuit, Father Ferreres, something more than a decade ago, asked the Catholic medical society of Barcelona, the Academy of Saints Cosmas and Damian, to give him its opinion as to the difference between real and apparent death, and then published in the ecclesiastical review, *Razon y Fe,* both the society's answer and the results of his own study of the subject, it has been very generally recognized by medical men and by theologians as well that the moment of real death is

considerably later than it was formerly supposed to be.

The limits of the present essay preclude anything more than a very brief summary of the conclusions arrived at by Father Ferreres and by Father Drum, S.J., whose study, "The Moment of Death," forms an appendix to Sanford's "Pastoral Medicine"; but the reader will find the matter discussed at considerable length in a former volume of the *Am. Eccl. Review.* For our present purpose it will perhaps suffice to state that the only really certain sign of death is decomposition of the whole body, and a somewhat advanced stage of decomposition at that. Partial decomposition, it is pointed out, may be caused by gangrene which precedes death. The stoppage of the breath and of the heart-beats gives no assurance that there is no latent life in the body: centuries ago Galen taught that there could be a beating of the heart and a respiration so slight as not to be perceptible, yet strong enough still to preserve life. Livid spots on the body may be due to asphyxia operating prior to death. The change in the countenance may be due to sudden irregularity in the heart-beats. Even the rigidity of the body is not a certain sign that life is quite extinct; such rigidity precedes the death of those attacked by spasms, lockjaw, and asphyxia. As for the oldtime tests of the candle or mirror placed near the nose or mouth, Father Drum remarks that they are of little importance nowadays. Premising that the period of latent life is probably longer in the case of sudden deaths than in those

following a lengthy illness, let us quote the conclusion of the writer just mentioned: "So long as we have any doubt about the presence of total decomposition, it is probable that we should administer conditionally the sacraments which may be the only possible means of bringing the subject to heaven."

As a culminating reflection on this whole theme that we have been treating: Happy the pastor whose conscience gives him the assurance that the hours of his own last illness will not be disturbed by terrifying memories of want of sympathy for the afflicted in mind or body, of sick-calls neglected, and of inadequate or perfunctory service rendered in the sick-room!

X

SPIRITUAL OUTINGS

Come let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour. Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving: and rejoice before Him with psalms.—*Ps. xciv, 1, 2.*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who . . . chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity.—*Eph. i, 3, 4.*

To judge rightly of our own worth we should retire from the world so as to see both its pleasures and pains in their proper light and dimensions—thus taking the heart from off this world and its allurement, which so dishonor the understanding as to turn the wisest of men into fools and children.—*Sterne.*

ON the occasion of a priests' retreat in a Canadian diocese a few years ago, the local news column of a city daily contained an item briefly recording the event, and terminating with the sentence: "The clergy enjoy these outings very much." The item, or this particular part of it, caused the casual Catholic reader some little amusement and was put down as another typical instance of the ineptitude habitually shown in the secular reporter's vocabulary when describing Catholic functions. And yet, grotesquely inaccurate as was the word "outings" in the given context, the mere prefixing of such an epithet as "religious" or "spiritual" would have transformed a ludicrous word into a peculiarly felicitous phrase. Literally, an outing is an airing, an excursion, an expedition, a pleasure-trip; and in a metaphorical sense it is aptly descriptive, not only of such exceptional religious exercises as the annual or

biennial diocesan retreat, but of other and minor deviations from the priest's ordinary weekly or monthly routine,—his taking the supernatural air.

One species of outing that enjoys considerable vogue among such people in the world as can afford it is that at the week-end, a phrase which has come by extension to mean the period from Friday night to Monday morning. Business and professional men and women in increasing numbers deem it an excellent plan to get away for that length of time from store or office, leave the noise and turmoil of the city behind them, and betake themselves to country house, or mountain hamlet, or seaside resort for change of air and scenes and ideas and people. A cleric's spiritual week-end need not perhaps, and in any case as a rule does not, last so long as does the worldling's. Instead of two full days, 'tis only one brief hour, the weekly hour of adoration. Obligatory on such priests as belong to the Eucharistic League, as on most of those who are members of religious communities, this exercise of devotion may well appeal on its merits to every minister of the sanctuary who is sincerely desirous of leading a truly sacerdotal life. What the visit to the Blessed Sacrament is to the day, the hour of adoration is to the week; and just as the clerical day may be considered devotionally incomplete unless at least fifteen minutes of its twenty-four hours have been spent in reverent and intimate communing with the divine Prisoner of the Tabernacle, so may that week be thought inadequately profitable which has not witnessed the priest's hour-long

converse with his exemplar and model, Christ in the Eucharist.

It is obvious that, if a priest is to acquit himself faithfully of this quasi-duty, he must assign to it a particular hour of a specified day. To tell one's self during a retreat that henceforth one will surely spend an hour a week in adoration, and yet to neglect fixing on the precise and definite hour to be so spent, is practically equivalent to a resolution to neglect the exercise. Here, once more, system and method in the partition of one's time are of major importance in the cleric's scheme of life. Even the most methodical of priests occasionally find it difficult enough to be faithful to their weekly hour; and it is almost axiomatic to declare that their immethodical, unsystematic brothers will be *un*faithful thereto oftener than not. Naturally, too, the less devout and fervent and recollected a man finds himself becoming, the more does he need to bind himself by a strict rule to at least physical presence in the sanctuary when his hour of adoration strikes. The lack of sensible devotion, far from being a valid reason for neglecting the exercise, is an additional argument against omitting it. Just as Our Lord when on earth declared that He had come to call sinners rather than the just to repentance, and that it was the sick, not the healthy, who had need of the physician, so we may believe He calls from the Tabernacle with especial insistence, not the most fervent, but the most tepid, of His priests to come to Him that they may be filled once more with the burning fire of divine love.

Without being actually tepid, however, a priest may conceivably assert that he finds the hour of adoration a tedious, onerous exercise, unless indeed he utilizes the time in reciting his office or in saying the rosary. As between these two substitutes for genuine communing with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, saying the beads is perhaps the less objectionable, if only because it looks less like constructively cheating Our Lord out of the time supposed to be devoted to Himself personally. The recitation of the office at some time during the day is obligatory, whether or not one makes on that day his hour of adoration; saying the beads is an optional devotion, and it is at least intelligible that a man may be so spiritually dry that he feels driven to adore and worship Our Lord by proxy, reciting the rosary with the intent and wish that Our Lady should graciously proffer Him the full and complete homage which he himself finds it difficult, if not impracticable, to render. Such a course is, we say, intelligible, and in the case of a layman is perhaps excusable enough; but surely there is little or no excuse for its adoption by an ordained priest, by "another Christ."

Why should there be anything of the nature of tedium or weariness involved in one's passing a short hour in the presence of Our Lord? Why should we not find the hour as delightful and as brief as we have sometimes perhaps found it irksome and interminable? Given that we are in the state of grace, and consequently enjoying Christ's friendship, why should our conversing with Him

be (to demand only the minimum) less enjoyable than a visit of equal length paid to a human friend whom we esteem and love? To the earthly friend who enjoys our confidence and of whose affection we are well assured we speak at no little length of our hopes and fears, our joys and griefs, our ambitions and our misgivings, our successes and failures, our trials and consolations. What prevents us from doing likewise in the case of the most loving, generous, sympathetic, and understanding of all possible friends? Who indeed among our earthly friends, even the closest of those to whom we unbosom ourselves most unreservedly, can know and appreciate as He does our very inmost thoughts, desires, and affections? To speak to Him with the simplicity of a child about those matters that form the staple of our daily thought and action can assuredly not be other than agreeable to One who has pronounced our similarity to little children an indispensable requisite to our entrance into the kingdom of Heaven.

If it be urged that unfortunately many of our habitual thoughts and affections and actions are not of a character pleasing to our Divine Friend, we are simply giving a reason for varying the tenor of our discourse with Him during our hour's audience, and not at all furnishing a valid excuse for neglecting that audience. If we have erred, there is all the more reason why we should reiterate to Him our penitential regrets, being entirely convinced that "a humble and contrite heart He will not despise." Possibly, however,—and

just here is presumably the paramount cause of our shirking a heart-to-heart communion with Our Lord—possibly we do not repent of, and have no intention of putting away from us, some unworthy affection or practice or habit in which we have indulged ourselves,—unworthy of our sacerdotal character although not, at least grievously, sinful. The skeleton in the closet, which secretly disturbs the domestic happiness of many a household joyous and tranquil to outward appearance, sometimes finds its counterpart in a hidden fear or anxiety locked away in the inner recesses of a priestly heart, and resolutely shunned as often as protesting conscience seeks to bring it to light and have its true nature and moral import thoroughly investigated. Now, there is no possible hiding such a skeleton from the all-seeing eye of Jesus; and the knowledge that an intimate personal communing with Him would necessitate some plain speaking and some determined action about the matter may well explain why we occasionally dislike to enter into confidential discourse with Him concerning those things that alone are worth while, the things of the soul.

Lack of generosity, then, to meet the demands which we know will be made upon us is one explanation of the irksomeness which is the connotation in some minds of that phrase "hour of adoration." Where no such lack of generosity exists, the congruous spending of the hour with as much pleasure as profit should prove surprisingly easy to a true priest, and that, too, with-

out his having recourse to books of any kind. One has only to follow the counsel of the psalmist, quoted as a foreword to this essay: "Come let us praise the Lord with joy: let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving: and rejoice before Him with psalms." Supposing that a priest, clad in surplice and stole and kneeling before the Tabernacle, should spend the full hour in reciting over and over again the Canticle of the Three Children, *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini, Domino,* etc., or psalm cl. *Laudate Dominum in sanctis ejus,* etc., who shall say that he has not worthily acquitted himself of his weekly debt to Him whom the heavenly choirs are perpetually greeting with, "Holy, holy, holy: Lord God in the highest?"

Another spiritual weekly outing which the priest should never neglect, supposing that he does not make it, as many exemplary clerics do, a *daily* exercise of piety, is the Way of the Cross. No pastor needs to be instructed on the manifold advantages accruing to the devout performance of this most excellent visual following of our crucified Redeemer along the doleful journey to Calvary, nor is it likely that any father of souls neglects to tell his people from time to time of the unnumbered indulgences, applicable to the souls in Purgatory, as well as to the living members of the Church, that are attached to "the Stations." Some pastors, however, may well be reminded that such meditation on the Passion and Death of Our Lord as almost unavoidably forms a concurrent activity of our going around the Stations is

peculiarly appropriate to priests, and that in the matter of indulgences it may well be that the pastor himself needs fully as many as does the pious old man or woman who is most frequently seen making the Way of the Cross.

In the everyday world of industry and commerce, legal enactments, national customs, or local celebrations of one kind or another render a monthly holiday practically habitual; and even in the clerical world a "day off" once a month, for a visit to a brother priest or other recreative purpose, is not unusual. And the soul has not less need than the body or mind of its monthly outing. St. Alphonsus Liguori teaches that it is advisable for religious (and one may surely say *a fortiori* for priests) to devote to spiritual exercises an hour in every day, a day in every month, and a week in every year, in order to keep up in the soul the fire of divine love. In many religious orders and congregations the monthly retreat is a matter of rule; and the experience of centuries has shown that it is of capital importance as a means of advancing in Christian perfection, or, at the very least, of arresting one's progress down the incline of lukewarmness in the service of God. The possible comment of some inconsiderate cleric: "Oh, that's all very well for religious, who are tending to perfection; but we diocesan priests are not religious," is utterly lacking in force or weight, for the excellent reason that, while the simple religious is bound only to tend towards perfection, the priest is supposed to be already constituted in that state. Cardinal Manning em-

phasizes the point in this extract from *The Eternal Priesthood:* "First, interior perfection is required before ordination as a prerequisite condition to Sacred Orders; second, the priesthood is the state of perfection; and third, a priest is bound to sustain himself in that state and to persevere in it to the end of life." Manning's doctrine is only a corollary of that of St. Thomas: "They who are appointed to divine ministries attain to a royal dignity, and ought to be perfect in virtue."

As a monthly spiritual outing, then, a retreat of one day may be warmly urged on every one who has received Holy Orders. Such an outing has the same end or purpose as mental prayer in general, of which, says Father Geiermann, it is only an extraordinary exercise. "We make a retreat in order to be enlightened; to know, purify, and correct ourselves; to be united with God and to pray to Him; to renew our spirit; to maintain ourselves in virtue and to increase in fervor." To allege that one has no time to devote to such an exercise, that parish business must be looked after, sick-calls attended to, the school visited, etc., etc., is to urge pretexts really too puerile to merit serious refutation. How does the parish manage to get along when we absent ourselves for a day or two to attend the funeral of a brother priest, to go to the quarterly conference, to take a pleasure trip, to assist at this or that ecclesiastical, educational, or social function? Our monthly retreat does not necessitate our absence from our parish at all, nor, for that matter, does

it interfere with the genuinely necessary work of the day. All that it demands is the setting aside of the hours unoccupied by such work for purposes of interior recollection, self-examination, and mental prayer. If we eliminate from our day the activities that are altogether optional rather than in any sense necessary, the busiest among us will have ample time for this spiritual overhauling, of which as a rule those who need it most make least account.

To minimize the importance of interior, effective prayer is to proclaim one's dissent from all the approved masters of the spiritual life. To quote only one such master, Cardinal Bellarmine: "This, I believe, I may most truly and confidently affirm, that without a diligent pursuit of internal prayer none will ever become truly spiritual, or attain to any degree of perfection. Many go often to the Sacraments, and yet remain as imperfect as before. Nay, many religious and priests read Scripture, receive and celebrate often, perhaps daily, and yet are devoid of devotion and the Spirit of God, cold in love of Him, earnest in love of vanities, full of impatience, envy, and inordinate desires. Why? Because they never seriously enter into their own hearts by exercises of introversion and true internal prayer." It is the old, old plaint of Jeremiah: "With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is no one that considereth in the heart." Now, it is evident that to set aside one day a month for the express purpose of "considering in the heart," devoting several hours of that day to a serious and

systematic examination of our interior life and to a comparison of our actual spiritual condition with the state of our soul at the beginning of our priestly life, can scarcely fail to prove of excellent effect. If it should do no more than to set us to doubting whether all the work that we are doing in the ministry is the outcome of genuine zeal for the glory of God, or simply the result of our natural desire for success in anything we undertake, the retreat will abundantly justify itself. It should never be lost sight of by the clergy that sacerdotal work done from purely natural motives looks so much like that accomplished with supernatural purity of intention that the two may readily be confounded even by the natural wroker himself; yet, without purity of intention, there is clearly no merit, no matter how strenuously one may spend himself in the activities of the ministry.

Not the least beneficial of the exercises congruous to a monthly retreat is the meditation on death. The attitude of the average priest towards death is not perhaps very dissimilar to that of the ordinary layman, different as their points of view might reasonably be expected to be. Nay, the greater familiarity of the priest with deathbed scenes may render the thought of the body's dissolution less impressive to him than to the person whose actual contact with death is an event out of the common, a relatively rare experience. Both priest and layman are prone to think of fatal illness and the quenching of life's final spark as matters quite impersonal, of speculative and pure-

ly academic, rather than practical, interest so far as they are individually concerned. Putting one's self in another's place by force of imagination, discerning insight, or sympathetic interest is never an easy task; putting one's self in a dying man's place is a peculiarly difficult one. Any one can readily enough philosophize on the inevitability of death, the certainty of its coming to each of us some time and the possibility of its coming soon; the preacher can moralize by the hour wisely and eloquently on the folly of living even for a day in a state in which we would not wish to die, and on the consequent wisdom of being always prepared to leave this world and meet one's eternal Judge; but the fact remains that both philosopher and moralist sometimes, if not habitually, fail to take their own lessons to heart, and that mentally to envisage one's self on the bed of death, anticipating by the power of the imagination the thoughts, reflections, regrets and fears and hopes of life's last supreme hour, is a process as difficult as it is unquestionably salutary. Like other difficult processes, however, it becomes easier with repetition; and the priest who seriously undertakes it once a month will probably discover that, as an aid to spiritual progress, it is more effective than a dozen sick-calls to the dying or a dozen funerals of departed brother priests.

The spiritual outings thus far considered are purely optional, and while it is tolerably safe to say that they form regular features in the life of the thoroughly exemplary and devout cleric, it would be rash to characterize the neglect of any

one or all of them as the hall-mark of sacerdotal tepidity. That they are commendable exercises, however, few priests, fervent or tepid, will be inclined to deny. Of the principal spiritual outing in priestly life, and the one that is not optional—but compulsory,—the annual or biennial diocesan retreat—it is scarcely too much to say that it is quasi-essential to genuine healthiness of soul. If a vacation of a few weeks or months is often helpful and sometimes necessary to the preservation of mental or physical well-being, there can be no possible doubt that a retreat of five or six days, at intervals of two years at most, cannot well be dispensed with by men entrusted with functions so sublime and burdened with responsibilities so great as are priests charged with the care of souls.

It is of course a commonplace of ascetical theology that a retreat is a signal grace; and it is no doubt the conviction of every reader of this page that the grace not only may be in theory, but at times actually is in practice, abused. Comparatively few of us indeed are likely to claim that we ourselves have profited to the fullest possible extent by all or most of the retreats which we have personally attended, and both the utterances and the actions of some of our clerical confréres have indicated that our lack of requisite fervor has not been unique. It is entirely possible to take a retreat all too lightly, possible indeed to look upon it as though it were in reality what the reporter of our initial paragraph proclaimed it, a veritable outing in the literal sense of the word, and to go through its various exer-

cises in a purely perfunctory fashion with no more than a semi-occasional moment of earnest thought and a half-formed evanescent purpose of amendment. The priest who, since his last retreat or since his ordination, has so lowered his standards from the ideals which he once cherished that he is not only imperfect and tepid but wholly content to remain so, is in dire need of an immense initial grace,—the real will to reform. Wanting that grace, either because he does not earnestly pray for it or because he rejects it when gratuitously proffered, he is safe to go through the retreat not only with absolutely no profit to himself but in all probability with considerable detriment to others.

In the important matter of observing silence, for instance, such a cleric will assuredly not set an example worthy of imitation, yet his example is safe to be followed by one or more of his friends who would just as readily imitate his fervor, had he the grace to show any. Hypocrisy is an unlovely policy even though it be called "the homage which vice pays to virtue," but one is tempted to wish that such priests as attend retreats without any well-defined and serious purpose of profiting by the manifold precious graces placed at their disposition, would act the hypocrite to the extent of veiling their interior dissipation under a decorous and reverent exterior. Such action would at least lessen the danger of their becoming veritable stumbling-blocks to their brethren. Given the periods of recreation during which talking is permitted at clerical retreats in

this country, what excuse is there, in downright sober earnestness, for visiting one another's rooms outside such periods, and violating the silence without which the really important part of the work of the retreat is impossible?

Only the veriest novice in spirituality needs to be told that the determinant factor in the success of a priest's retreat is the priest himself,—his personal activity in self-examination and mental prayer, and his personal passivity as well, in that quiet, undistracted recollectedness which best fits the soul for the reception of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Other and external factors,—the exhortations of the preacher, the conference of the bishop or archbishop, listening to the reading of good books, devotional exercises in common, the example of thoroughly devout brother priests—these are aids, always helpful and sometimes perhaps necessary; but, if I am to make a truly profitable, a good and holy retreat, I must act on the principle that its essential work cannot be transferred or turned over to any one else, but must of necessity be done by myself. The stage-settings may be more or less elaborate, and other figures may appear in the different scenes; but the dominant characters in this real soul-drama are only two: God and myself. The preacher may be able, persuasive, brilliantly eloquent, full of force and fervor and unction, yet at best he is merely an assistant-instructor; the real retreat-master is none other than the Holy Spirit. And as that Spirit communicates His lessons in their fullness to those only whose hearts

are as "enclosed gardens," His docile pupils must shun levity and idle talk and discursive thought and interior dissipation of any and every kind.

It is hardly necessary to remark that a priest who habitually enjoys the weekly and monthly outings of which we have spoken, the hour of adoration and the monthly retreat of one day, will presumably be better prepared than others to avail himself of all the multifarious graces which God pours out so lavishly on the occasion of the annual retreat in common. Quite naturally, he will have less difficulty in ridding his mind at the outset of all extraneous considerations and entering at once into the proper spirit. His passably frequent meditations during the year on death and the eternal truths connected therewith have so habituated him to the genuinely supernatural atmosphere of the interior life that he finds himself quite at home and at his ease in his present environment, thereby presenting a marked contrast to his brother cleric (exceptional perhaps, but existent) whose quasi-habitual neglect of mental prayer and whose living on the surface rather than in the depths of his soul have so despiritualized his views that the atmosphere of the retreat oppresses him as the natural air oppresses a fish out of water.

Lest such plain speaking as the foregoing be set down as gross exaggeration, let there be quoted here a few sentences from "The Interior Life," edited by Father Tissot, Superior General of the Salesian Missionaries. From chapter viii., bearing the title "For Priests," we select the following:

All day the priest, devoted to his ministry, is given up to the service of God, and occupied with supernatural work. The normal effect of this employment should be to unite the priest deeply, intimately, and constantly, to God. How does it happen that it keeps him at a distance? For it is impossible to disguise the fact that such is the too common result of his work to-day. Whence comes this antagonism,—I was about to say this duel to the death—between exercises of piety and the ministry, the one killing the other? . . . What, in fact, does the priest whose piety is becoming paralyzed look for in his ministry? What has he in view? What does he love? Two things. The first is himself. He sees, loves, and seeks himself far too much. He is far too much in the front rank in many of his intentions. How many are his personal seekings and views! How many of his ideas are neither those of God nor of His Church! How many customs and practices there are which are not exactly in the spirit of the liturgy and of discipline! And then, there are the joys of success, the satisfactions arising from gratitude, the want of praise, and all kinds of other things. A host of different kinds of self-seeking. All this tends to get the upper hand within, and what is inspired by this spirit does not go towards God.[1]

Now, if this criticism be true of the man to whom is applicable the first sentence of the passage just quoted, to the man who is "all day devoted to his ministry, etc.," what might not be truthfully asserted of the occasional priest whose day is not given up to the service of God or spent in supernatural work! This much at least may be affirmed without laying one's self open to the

[1] *The Interior Life,* pp. 137-8. (R. & T. Washbourne, 1913.)

charge of advocating an impracticably high standard of sacerdotal piety: even strenuous work in the ministry is not incompatible with too little concern for one's personal relations with God; and there are few if any priests whose interior life would not be notably widened and deepened by the adoption of these exercises to which we have given the name of spiritual outings.

XI

THE LONGEVITY OF PRIESTS

Every man is entitled to his century.—*Sir James Crichton-Browne, M. D.*

The number of the days of men at the most are a hundred years.—*Ecclus. xviii, 8.*

Long life is a great boon, for the longer one lives the more merits one can amass for eternity.—*Spirago.*

WITH advancing years the average man is apt to modify his opinions considerably on a variety of subjects, and on none perhaps is the modification more continuous and more radical than on—the advancing years themselves. Old age, its constituents, its desirableness, its comparative advantages and drawbacks,—these are matters about which one's point of view and, in consequence, one's convictions, invariably change from decade to decade until, in most cases, opinions once stoutly maintained are eventually abandoned as untenable, and judgments once authoritatively pronounced are entirely reversed. To the young priest with the sacred oil still moist upon his hands the cleric who is celebrating the silver jubilee of his ordination is an old man; when he himself attains the age of forty-nine or fifty, he considers himself so far from old age that he boasts of being yet in his prime; and even when he reaches the golden goal of half a century in the priesthood (as perhaps one in a thousand priests in this country does), he still flatters him-

self that after all he is not so *very* old, and that there is really no good reason why he should not look forward to the rarely scaled mountain-peak of the diamond jubilee.

Different as may be, however, the opinions of young, middle-aged, and elderly clerics as to the precise period when unmistakable old age really arrives, it is probable that all three classes may find something of interest, if not of instruction and edification, in a discussion of the theme which forms the title of this essay, the longevity of priests. It may be well to emphasize at the outset the indubitable fact that the length or briefness of one's days, in the ordinary course of God's providence, depends very largely upon one's self. It is no disparagement of some excellent persons, priests as well as laymen, to say that they occasionally speak of death in a strain which might suggest their belief in fatalism, the doctrine that all things are subject to fate, or come and go by inevitable predetermination. We have of course unimpeachable authority for the statement that it is appointed to all men once to die, and it is the part of a true Christian, and more especially of a priest, to be thoroughly prepared to die at any moment; but there is nothing either in Holy Writ, or in the Church's teachings based thereon, to warrant the belief that this or that individual man is destined to die before he has rounded out the three score years and ten mentioned as life's term by the Royal Psalmist, or even the full century which Ecclesiasticus gives as life's extreme limit.

Resignation to the will of God is altogether

laudable, but there is no necessity of attributing to His positive willing one or another occurrence which, obviously, He only permits. The free will of man himself not infrequently thwarts the designs of our Heavenly Father,—every sin is such a thwarting; and it may well be that many a death spoken of as being in accordance with "God's holy will" is in reality a frustration of Heaven's beneficent designs, a frustration effected by the departed one himself. It would be patently incongruous, if not worse, to say of a suicide that he died "in God's own good time," or that God "called him," "took him home," or the like; and it is worth while to remember that self-destruction may be brought about slowly as well as swiftly. Habitual violation of the laws of health is, in effect, progressive suicide, a truth to which we all bear testimony when we talk about such a one's exposing himself "to take his death of cold," or his "burning the candle at both ends," his "killing himself with work," or his "worrying himself to death."

The fact is that, in the case of priests especially, we are too fond of assuming that God's extraordinary providence intervenes to offset or reverse the natural laws which control and determine the duration and the termination of the life of the body. That He does so intervene at times is doubtless true. We find proofs of the fact in the Book of Wisdom:—"He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his

soul. . . . Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time: For his soul pleased God: therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities." There is of course no reason why God's action, as here recorded, should not be repeated in our day; but the fact remains that in His ordinary dealings with men He allows natural laws to produce their natural effects; and the man who violates these laws and in consequence dies prematurely is more likely to have been the victim of his own imprudence than the recipient of God's miraculous favor. There is no intention here of denying that health may be lawfully and meritoriously disregarded in God's service; life itself may be sacrificed for His sake, or for that of His servants,—"the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep;" but this, too, is out of the ordinary course of events. In our day and country the better the health of the pastor of souls, the better as a rule the service he renders his flock, and the longer he lives the more efficient may that service become.

Apropos of efficiency, there is in Father Lockington's *Bodily Health and Spiritual Vigor* a paragraph which is worth the consideration of all clerics. It is his comment on this passage from Ecclesiasticus: "Be not greedy in any feasting, nor pour out thyself upon any meat, for in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished; for he that is temperate will prolong life." "Think," says the author mentioned, "of what the prolongation of life means in the saving of souls.

Every added year means an increase of valuable experience and efficiency. The matured man who has at his command the garnered forces of long experience is a mighty force whose power increases as the years pass. Such a one who, with body full of physical vigor and mind steadied by time and stored with knowledge, is young at fifty, is a tremendous power for good among his fellow-men, and one that will draw souls to Christ with irresistible force. 'By surfeiting many have perished'; if they perish and go Home, even though it be but a few years before the time at which God intended that they should go, such defection from the ranks of the soldiers of Christ means loss of souls."

There is nothing reprehensible, therefore, in the desire very generally entertained by men who have reached the sixth decade of their years to attain the blessing promised by God to those who honor their parents, to be "long-lived upon earth," or in that reasonable care of the health (a good deal less common than the desire mentioned) which is a necessary means to that worthy end. On the contrary, such desire and such care are in all probability quite in accordance with God's inscrutable designs, just as a manner of life which brings about frequent ailments in the present and logically leads to a truncated future can scarcely be other than displeasing to the Father who has called us to a ministry wherein, exceptional cases apart, the best work is accomplished by sound body and sound mind in conjunction with genuine piety and enlightened zeal. That

wonderful piece of mechanism which we call our body is, after all, the work of God; He is the author of all the laws by which its multifarious movements are regulated; and there seems to be no good reason for believing that the divine Mechanician objects to our keeping the complicated machine in good condition and smooth running order. He Himself indeed tells us: "There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body;" and it is significant that the record of the mortal life of the divine Exemplar and Model of all priests makes no mention of His having ever been sick.

Given, then, that long life is a blessing, and that such-health-giving habits as are apt to prolong our days are commendable, let us consider in the light of historical records and of present-day experience the probable length of days that may be reasonably looked forward to by twentieth century people generally and by priests in particular. To begin with, centenarianism or the actual living of a hundred years is neither a fantastic dream nor even a phenomenal achievement. The statistics of the British Registrar-General's office, statistics which cover a longer period than do those of the United States, conclusively show that one person in every 127,000 rounds out the full century. In most European countries the exact registration of births, baptisms, and deaths is attended to by Church or State, or by both, and accordingly the longevity records of such countries postulate a credence that can hardly be given to statistics compiled in

a less methodical fashion from data not so authoritative. A few years ago, in 1906, the *American Medicine* magazine published some interesting figures on this subject, the result of investigations by German statisticians. The investigators found that the German Empire with a population of fifty-five millions had only seventy-eight centenarians. France with fewer than forty millions had two hundred and thirteen; England had one hundred and forty-six; Scotland, forty-six; Denmark, two; Belgium, five; Sweden, ten; and Norway, with two and a third million inhabitants, twenty-three. In Switzerland there were no centenarians, but in Spain with a population of about eighteen millions there were four hundred and ten persons who had passed their hundredth birthday. The Balkan peoples, however, were shown to be the longest-lived. The centenarians in Servia numbered five hundred and seventy-three; in Roumania, one thousand and eighty-four; and in Bulgaria, three thousand eight hundred and eighty-three. In other words, Bulgaria had a centenarian for every thousand of its inhabitants, thus holding the international record for old people. About the same period, the United States census gave the number of people in this country who had reached the age of one hundred years or more as three thousand nine hundred and eighty-one.

It may possibly afford some consolation to the would-be centenarian to learn that his chances of attaining the goal of his ambition are considerably better in this twentieth century than they

would have been in the sixteenth or seventeenth. The foremost medical authority of England assures us that within the past three centuries the average working life of English-speaking men has been doubled. While a few persons lived, three hundred years ago, as long as do people now, and some strong or favored ones showed efficient working powers as long, the ordinary, common life was worn out in what is now deemed middle age. In Shakespeare's time, as is evident from the text of his dramas, persons who had reached the half-century mark were accounted venerable. in *Richard II.*, for instance, we find a man of only fifty-eight addressed as "Old John of Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster." So, too, the contemporaries of Admiral Coligny, who was murdered in 1572, write of him as a very old man, although he was but fifty-three. That the average length of life has been almost doubled within a few centuries is of course due to the progress of civilization, the amelioration of the workers' lot, and especially the improved sanitary conditions, and this, notwithstanding the increased strenuousness and nervous excitement and restlessness of existence at the present day. The mean duration of life in France at the close of the eighteenth century was twenty-nine years; in 1859 the average had risen to forty years. Among "facts about the earth" to be found in that statistics-crammed volume, the *World Almanac*, the general (and probably not scientifically accurate) statement is made that: "The average duration of human life is about thirty-three years. One-quarter of the peo-

ple on the earth die before the age of six years, one-half before the age of sixteen, and only about one person of each one hundred lives to be sixty-five."

How do priests compare with other mortals in this matter of longevity? From such data as the present writer has found available it seems evident that they are longer-lived than their lay brethren. A good many priests will in all likelihood be as much surprised to read this statement as was the writer in discovering its truth. For years I had been entertaining the opinion, not to say the conviction, that the span of life in the priesthood is notably shorter than in most other professions or callings, that genuinely old priests are rare, and that the vast majority of clerics—Catholic clerics at any rate—pass away in early middle age. A cursory examination of the facts in the case has led to a revision of that opinion. In the first place, consulting the leading source of information regarding the mortality in various occupations, which source is admittedly the English statistics, we find that the healthiest of all occupations, not even excepting the farmer's, is that of the clergyman: the death-rate of clerics is less than that of any other class of men. An obvious comment on this fact is perhaps: "Yes, but the life of a parson in England is so different from that of a priest in the United States that your adduced fact has very little evidential value." Well, to confine our inquiry to this country: according to the U. S. Census reports, the death rate for all males in the republic is 18.91;

and the death rate of priests, as compiled from the official Catholic Directory (for the years 1912-3-4-5), is only 15.3. To be quite fair, the comparison should be between males over twenty-four and priests; and as between these two classes the advantage in favor of the clerics is still greater.

As the reader is no doubt aware, the death rate means the average number of persons dying in a year for each 1,000 of the population. Now, the Catholic Directory for 1912 gives the number of priests in this country as 17,491. During that year, as we learn from the Necrology list of the Directory for 1913, 257 of these priests died. The proportion was therefore 14.6 to the thousand. The rate was a little higher in 1913, 318 of 17,945 priests having passed away in that year, making the proportion 17.2 per thousand. In 1914, of 18,568 priests only 266 died, the rate being 14.3, leaving the average rate for the three years 15.3, as stated above. In the registration area of the United States for the year 1900 the death rate of males between the ages of 25 and 34 was 9.5; of those between 35 and 44, 12.4; of those between 45 and 64, 24.1; and of those aged 65 and upward, 91.1. The average rate for all males above twenty-five is accordingly not a little in excess of that for our priests.

Abstract statistics, however, are proverbially dry; let us consider a few concrete facts that have to do with our subject. In a Community Cemetery a few rods distant from the writer's residence there are buried twenty-five religious

priests,—teachers, missionaries, and pastors. The average age of the band is a little more than fifty years. A few months before his death in 1913, the late Bishop Hogan of Kansas City gave his chancellor, the Rev. W. Keuenhof, a collection of one hundred and thirty-five obituary cards of priests deceased in the archdiocese of St. Louis and the dioceses of Kansas City and St. Joseph, requesting the chancellor to calculate the average lifetime and the average period spent in the priesthood. The lifetime was found to be 56.9 years, and the priestly period, 30.25 years. In all probability one factor that made for longevity in the case of a majority of these Missouri priests was their living in a sparsely rather than a densely settled country, with outlying missions as well as a home parish to be attended to, and consequently with a certain amount of enforced outdoor exercise. Our third concrete instance has to do with a group of priests who lived and died, not in this country, but on the Foreign Missions. The *Missions Catholiques,* published in Lyons, France, gives each year the necrology list for all the missions subject to the Propaganda. Several years ago the present writer, computing from such a list the average lifetime of one hundred and fifteen priests deceased during the preceding twelvemonth, found it to be something more than fifty-four years,—and he drew the moral that the simple life and hard work are by no means so inimical to longevity as they are ofttimes thought to be.

Whether or not the average lifetime of the pas-

tors and curates in our Eastern States, where parishes have been longer established and large towns and cities are more numerous than in Missouri, measures up to the figures given in the preceding paragraph we cannot say; but we are inclined to think that it does not. Sometime in the future, perhaps, the reverend chancellors of the country will furnish the publishers of the Directory with not only the names but the ages of priests on the yearly death-roll; and when that is done, it will probably appear that the average lifetime of the American cleric is nearer to fifty than to sixty. Even at sixty, however, a man nowadays is not considered old. An optimistic American philosopher, or philosophical American, who at fourscore and five is still mentally and physically active remarked only the other day that "if fifty be the old age of youth, then sixty must be the youth of old age;" and a goodly number of sexagenarians, both clerical and lay, will applaud his epigram. Another genial American who lived eight decades and a half—from 1809 to 1894—Oliver Wendell Holmes, expressed much the same idea in a volume, *Over the Teacups,* written when he was eighty-two. "When fifty is reached, somehow sixty does not look so old as it once used to, and seventy is still far off. After sixty the stern sentence of the burial service seems to have a meaning that one did not notice in former years. There begins to be something personal about it. But if one lives to be seventy he soon gets used to the text with the three score years and ten in it, and begins to count himself among those who

by reason of strength are destined to reach four-score, of whom he can see a number still in reasonably good condition."

It is tolerably safe to affirm that the world of to-day looks upon a death that occurs before one has reached what has been styled "the grand climacteric," one's sixty-third year, as more premature than timely; and, given one's perfect submission to God's will in the matter, the priest who takes prudential measures to prolong his life up to and even considerably beyond that period merits commendation instead of censure, the more so as such measures coincidently contribute to the greater efficiency of his priestly ministry. Of the nature of these measures, the means to be taken in order than one may live out his full span of years, but little can be said in such an essay as this, and that little must necessarily be general rather than specific. In general terms, then, the surest way of prolonging life is to keep one's self in perfect health. The fewer the cloggings and stoppages and partial breakdowns and over-strainings that the bodily machine is called upon to endure, the longer will it be able to do effective service. Perfect health, it may be well to remind the reader, is something different from what is usually termed "good health." The latter phrase frequently means nothing more than freedom from chronic or intermittent maladies. Many a priest will reply to the query, "How's the health, Father?"—"Very good, thank God," even though once in a while he suffers for a day or two from indigestion, biliousness, nervous headache, rheu-

matism, coughs, and colds; while his brother cleric in perfect health is not only free from all such occasional ailments and indispositions, but is full of the joy of life, does his work with pleasure, and takes his recreation with much of the zest of a school-boy. A succinct rule for the attainment or the preservation of this perfection of health is formulated by Dr. W. Hall: "Let your food be simple; never eat too much; take exercise enough; be systematic in all things; if unwell, starve yourself till you are well again,—and you may throw care to the winds and physic to the dogs."

One truth that priests and other persons should bear in mind and profit by is that the most eminent physicians of our time discourage the use of medicines, drugs, pills, powders, tablets, purgatives, stimulants, tonics, etc., etc. The true secret, they tell us, of preserving health and prolonging life is to build up the bodily resistance, to put and keep our various organs in such a state of preparedness (to use the word of the hour) that these organs will be able successfully to ward off the attacks of all germs, bacteria, bacilli, and the like assailants of our physical well-being. Such bodily resistance is developed by a methodical plan of living, by regularity in all good habits, by temperance in the use of food and drink, by taking from six to eight hours of sleep every night, by judiciously mixing recreation with work, and by devoting several hours a day to exercise in the open air. This last item merits emphasizing as it is the point about which very many middle-

aged priests are altogether too remiss. For the past decade the present writer has been preaching by word and example the benefits of walking as a clerical exercise, and he was accordingly rather gratified in May, 1915, to read a warning issued to the people of this country by the United States Public Health Service. As the warning is entirely pertinent to the theme of this essay, it will be permissible to quote it in its entirety. Here it is:—

The death rate after the age of forty is increasing in spite of more sanitary modes of living and greater protection against communicable diseases. The expectation of life after forty is less than it was thirty years ago. This is due largely to increased prevalence of the diseases of degeneration.

The muscles, arteries, and other organs of those who, as a result of sedentary occupation or indulgence, take too little exercise, degenerate. Heart disease, kidney disease and other ills follow.

Take exercise. Take daily exercise. Have a hobby that gets you out of doors. Walk to your business, to your dressmaker's, walk for the sake of walking. Join a walking club and keep your weekly score of miles. Keep chickens, make a garden, wheel the baby, or play golf or any other game, but take two hours' outdoor exercise every day.

Gymnasium work is good for those who like it and can afford it, but avoid heavy athletics. Don't try to be a "strong man." The champion athletes die young. Be a moderate, persistent, daily exponent of exercise.

You may not burn the family carriage, as Ben-

jamin Franklin suggested, but at least, as he advised, walk, walk, walk.

Several months after the appearance of the foregoing advice in the public press, I contributed to the New York *Sun* the following verses which contain both a bit of personal experience and something of the philosophy of walking for health purposes:

A RHYME OF THE ROAD

Some years ago, in 1906, in search of perfect health—
A boon of greater worth by far than Rockefeller's wealth—
I took to heart a hobby, or a fad, as some might say,
And vowed to walk in rain or shine a dozen miles a day.
The perfect health came speedily; 'tis staying with me yet,
And daily still my vow I keep without the least regret:
The out-of-doors has captured me, I've yielded to its wiles,
And incidentally have walked just

Forty
Thousand
Miles.

The time for all this walking? Well, it takes three hours a day,
One-third the time I give to work, and, doubt it as you may,
That work is more in quantity and better, too, in kind
Than marked the listless, walkless years I've left so far behind,—
For perfect health means energy and will and active brain;
It makes of work a pleasure and it keeps the judgment sane.
Some hours of precious time, mayhap, I've wasted otherwhiles,
But not the hours I've spent in walking

Forty
Thousand
Miles.

The moral of this story? Why, there isn't any, son,
Unless it be the warning lately sent from Washington.
The U. S. Board of Public Health, disease's game to balk,
Advises men and women just to "walk, walk, walk."
Of course you know your own needs best: I don't presume
to say
You ought to do as I do—walk a dozen miles a day;
But if you'd like, ten years from now, to find your life all
smiles,
Get busy, and from now till then walk
Forty
Thousand
Miles.

To sum up: length of days is an undoubted blessing to priests as to other people, and is consequently a boon to be desired and (always of course in conformity to God's holy will) to be striven for. Perfect health as the surest, and only available, guarantee of a long life, may accordingly be sought after and developed assiduously without fear of contravening the divine plan. Such health is of inestimable worth to the pastor of souls as it obviously increases his efficiency and his working power. Neglect of one's health and violation of the natural laws by which it is preserved are, apart from cases in which higher duties authorize such violation, merely steps of varying length on the road to self-destruction. We must all die, but to none of us is it permitted to advance, directly or indirectly, the date which in God's designs is set for the last scene in the drama of our life, our passage from time to eternity.

XII

PRIESTLY LOYALTY TO MOTHER CHURCH

We should love God as Our Father, and the Church as our Mother.—*St. Augustine.*

If we love our native land so dearly because we were born and bred there, and are ready even to die for it, how much deeper should be our love for the Church, which has given us the life that has no end.—*Leo XIII.*

The conformity of our actions to our engagements, whether express or implied, is fidelity. . . . Thus a subject is faithful to the engagement which binds him to the sovereign of the state. If, in such a case, love is added to fidelity, it becomes loyalty.—*Whewell.*

IT is probably not an unwarrantable assumption to suppose that among the various subjects discussed, Sunday after Sunday from January to December, by the average priest in this country, one which recurs occasionally, if not frequently, is the Church. That sermons or instructions on this particular subject may well be frequent rather than occasional is intelligible enough because of the many-sidedness of the idea of which "the Church" is the verbal sign, and the multiple aspects under which, accordingly, the subject may be congruously and profitably considered. So large and comprehensive indeed is the general theme that a pastor who desires to give his people anything approaching adequate instruction on the matter will probably find that he must prepare, not one sermon or instruction, but a series of discourses dealing in orderly fashion with the numerous topics branching out naturally from

the theme's main stem or trunk. The meaning of "the Church"; its names and symbols; its institution and organization; its end or purpose; its social constitution, its head and members; its power and prerogatives; its marks, or the signs by which it is known,—all these subordinate ideas evidently proffer material for more than one or two effective and not unnecessary instructions.

To the question, for instance, What is meant by the Church? one of the recently published aids to preachers gives no fewer than fifteen or sixteen separate answers, and that, too, without exhausting the possibilities. For the benefit of such readers as have not access to the volume referred to, it may be permissible to quote brief summaries of these answers without at all developing the main idea therein contained. The Church, then, is the society of the faithful of Christ. More restrictively, it is the society of the baptized faithful, who profess the same faith, are bound by the same sacraments and sacrifice, and are united under the Vicar of Christ, the supreme Pontiff and Bishop of Rome. Viewed universally and considered as embracing the mystic body of which Christ is the head, it may be defined as "the human race as united to Christ as head, and constituting with Him a mystic body or mystic family." The Church is Christ's spiritual kingdom, analogous to a temporal kingdom. Again, the Church is the kingdom of Christ, analogous to civil kingdoms, but at the same time different in many respects. It has its king, Christ; its viceroy, the Roman Pontiff; the governors of its provinces,

the bishops; ministers of lesser rank, the priests; and its citizens, the faithful throughout the world. The Church is the army of the Lord with Christ as the supreme ruler, the Pope as its earthly commander, the bishops as generals, the priests as subordinate officers, and the faithful as rank and file. From another viewpoint, the Church is the family of the Lord, with Christ as father and all the faithful as brothers.

In a more figurative sense, the Church is a sheep-fold, under one shepherd who leads his flock to the pastures of doctrine and the sacraments, whilst at the same time He protects them from wolves. Similarly, the Church is the garden of the Lord wherein fruit-bearing trees (the faithful) are planted. So, too, the Church is the house or the temple of the Lord,—its walls (of living stones), the faithful; its perpetual foundation, Peter and his successors; its columns, the bishops and the other orders of the hierarchy; and its altar, Christ Himself. The Church is moreover the mystic body of the Lord, animated by the Holy Spirit, with Christ as the invisible, and the Pope as the visible, head; and the faithful united to their priests as the members. The Church is the spouse of Christ, and our mother: she has begotten each one of us, she nourishes and loves us. And she is a queen, who walks through the earth "doing good and healing all who are oppressed." The Church is the boat of Peter, bearing Christ. She is called also by many other names and symbols such as the image of heaven, heaven's gate, and heaven's beginning. Finally, the Church is

the wheel of the glory of God that was shown to Ezechiel, representing the different nations subdued by the Gospel, and bound to the yoke of Christ. ("Pulpit Themes," pp. 306-11.)

Now, the preacher who amplifies and elaborates any of the foregoing definitions or similitudes, or who expounds to his hearers such other topics as are mentioned in our initial paragraph, is safe to insist on the reverence and obedience which the faithful owe to the Church and her head, the Sovereign Pontiff. Adopting St. Augustine's dictum, "We should love God as Our Father, and the Church as our Mother," he may aptly quote the scriptural injunction, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee." (Exod. xx, 12.) In expatiating upon the truth that the Church is truly our spiritual mother, the mother of our souls,—showing how she watches over us from the cradle to the grave, how she regenerates us in the waters of baptism, holds out to us the plank of penance when our innocence is shipwrecked, nourishes us for eternal life with the Holy Eucharist, blesses our joys, condoles with our sorrows, comforts us on our deathbed, accompanies us to our grave, and prays for us long after that grave is forgotten by all human memories,—in emphasizing such points as these, the pastor naturally points out that the Church is consequently eminently worthy of honor, and that the most effective way by which to honor Mother Church is to give her full and unquestioning obedience.

The pastor is all the more likely to insist on this duty of obedience because of the fact that to himself, as a member of the Church's teaching body, some measure of that obedience is due from his hearers. It is not improbable indeed that he lays considerably more stress, both in his public utterances and in his private reflections, upon the obedience which his parishioners owe him than on that which he himself owes the Church in general and his immediate ecclesiastic superiors in particular. Concerning this latter obligation St. Paul is quite explicit: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them; for they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief; for this is not expedient for you." (Heb. xiii, 17.) In consequence of this command which the apostle lays upon all, says Bishop Hay, "the Church from the very earliest ages has required a very great obedience from her clergy to their superiors, so as even to demand a solemn promise from them at their admission to the priesthood to obey their bishops. Hence in the third epistle attributed to Pope Clement I., it is thus decreed, '*Qui suis episcopis non obediunt indubitanter rei et reprobi existunt,*' and a little after, '*si autem vobis Episcopis non obedierint omnes Presbyteri, Diaconi ac Subdiaconi, et reliqui Clerici, non solum infames, sed et extorres a regno Dei et consortio fidelium, ac a limitibus sanctae Dei ecclesiae alieni erunt.*' "

Given that the ordinary priest has not entirely divested himself of what Scripture calls the "old man," but is still prone to show that even ordina-

tion has not thoroughly transformed his human nature, it is not improbable that his obedience will be rendered more promptly and fully to orders addressed to him personally by his bishop, either *viva voce* or by letter, than to the statutes of the diocese, the rulings of diocesan synods, or the decrees of provincial or national councils. Yet there can be no question that these statutes, rulings, and decrees have binding power, even though they do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, as do the decrees of a general or ecumenical council of the Church. And it ought to be superabundantly clear to any cleric that in his character of an officer in the Church's army, he should set the rank and file a splendid example of ready obedience to his superior officers, whether their commands be issued verbally, are included in the orders of the day, or are a constituent part of the army code. Nay, more, it should be patent to him that his obedience should not only be such as to show forth his fidelity to his obligations, but should possess that additional ingredient of loving service which raises fidelity to the higher plane of loyalty.

In the world of politics or that of commerce, as in the army or the navy, one of the highest compliments that can be paid to a subordinate or adjutant or lieutenant is to say of him that he is distinguished by "a fine sense of loyalty" to his chief or chiefs. What then should not be the habitual attitude of a priest of God towards the Church which has dowered him with such power and dignity, to the spiritual Mother who has

treated him as her child of special predilection! Surely nothing less than the most grateful devotion, the readiest acquiescence in her decisions, the promptest submission to her demands, and the keenest sensitiveness to anything reflecting on her honor and repute. If there was ever a case in which the adage *noblesse oblige* could be appositely cited to enforce honorable conduct, assuredly the essential nobility of our priestly character imposes on us the obligation of being more intensely and whole-heartedly loyal to the Church and her supreme head, the Sovereign Pontiff, than is the strongest partisan to his political chief, the most devoted patriot to his country, or the most affectionate son to his parents. In just that degree in which the soul outranks the body and the eternal transcends the temporal, priestly loyalty to our Mother the Church and to our Holy Father the Pope should outrank and transcend any other allegiance, fealty, devotedness, or love to be found on earth.

As a matter of contemporary fact, is our loyty of this high character and standard? Do we habitually look upon devotion to the Church as one of those primal duties that "shine aloft like stars" and will not be ignored? And is our devotion of the practical, unvisionary kind that translates itself into concrete acts? Is there no danger of our lapsing into a state of mind in which the Church takes on the vague and nebulous form of a mere abstraction, a more or less glorious entity, but an ideal one to which in actual everyday life there corresponds no tangible real-

ity? Do we sufficiently often meditate on the Church and endeavor to get a just and fairly adequate conception of what she is, and what she means to the world at large and to ourselves individually? Would it not come to us in the nature of a surprise to learn that, far from being uniformly loyal to her and to the Pope, we not infrequently manifest the most ungrateful disloyalty and constructive treason to both? One may be disloyal without breaking out into open rebellion. It is possible to incur the stigma without proclaiming one's self a Modernist or advocating, in preposterous pride of intellect, opinions verging on downright heresy. It is possible even to profess unshaken loyalty to Mother Church in the very breath in which one equivalently questions her authority, her jurisdiction, her power, or her prudence.

Is it loyalty to the Church, or the reverse of that quality, to lay such stress on the human side of her organization and administration as to suggest that she is no more than a man-made society subject to all the weaknesses of other political or social bodies? Does the truly loyal priest talk about ecclesiastical appointments or the conferring of ecclesiastical honors and dignities as if they were nothing more or less than the entirely natural results of astute wire-pulling and the judicious outlay of benefactions that call for a *quid pro quo?* Does he think of the election of a new Pope as of a matter in which the preponderant influence and the determining factor is the nationality of the majority of the cardinals who cast

their votes? Does he think and speak of these and such like matters as if the Holy Ghost had nothing more to do with them than with the bestowal of an honorary collegiate degree or the election of a congressman to the House of Representatives?

Again, in the matter of dogmas, decisions, and discipline, is it consistent with genuine priestly loyalty to be forever drawing fine-spun distinctions between points on which the Church or the Pope is, or is not, infallible? Apart from loyalty altogether, does the ordinary priest who permits himself a good deal of loose talk about such topics take sufficient heed of a consideration which Father Joyce, S.J., thus calls attention to: "Moreover, theologians are agreed that the gift of infallibility in regard to the deposit (of the faith) must, by necessary consequence, carry with it infallibility as to certain matters intimately related to the Faith. There are questions bearing so nearly on the preservation of the Faith that, could the Church err in these, her infallibility would not suffice to guard the flock from false doctrine. Such, for instance, is the decision whether a given book does or does not contain teaching condemned as heretical." To take a concrete case or two occurring within recent years, have the comments which the reader of this page has heard from priestly lips (or, it may be, has himself made) on Pius X.'s *Motu proprio* on plain chant or his decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* on frequent and daily Communion, been invariably expressions of unquestioning loyalty to the Holy

Father? Have they not sometimes rather been censorious criticisms on the Pope's action, presumptuous declarations as to the want of wisdom or expediency or prudence shown in the papal desires or commands, and (to qualify them as they really deserve to be qualified) thoroughly impertinent animadversions on matters beyond the competency of the speakers to decide?

Only two or three years ago the present writer found himself rather unexpectedly called upon to take the side of the Pope in an after-dinner discussion about the Holy Father's allowing children to go to Communion much earlier than had hitherto been the general practice. My opponent in the discussion was my senior in years and my superior in rank—he wore the purple; so it behooved me to be guarded in my expression of dissent from his views. Somebody having broached the subject of the Pope's recent action concerning the Communion of children, the man with the purple remarked: "Well, I don't see any necessity of going into hysterics about the matter. Personally, I shall continue to let my children make their First Communion at the age of twelve or thereabouts." Some measure of surprise having been manifested at this avowed opposition to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff, he explained that opposition, the gist of his argument being contained, apparently, in the rhetorical interrogation, "What can children of seven or eight understand of the Blessed Eucharist and the mystery of Transubstantiation?" The rather obvious reply was: "If it comes to that, what can *we* under-

stand of the mystery? You and I take it on faith, and so will the children." The incident was rather forcibly impressed on my memory by the action of a third person, a venerable cleric who nodded wise approval and ejaculated many a "Just so" while my opponent was talking, and who, the very next day, in conversation with a foreign Monsignor, a member of the Roman Rota, gave the same tokens of approbation to that dignitary's diametrically opposite argument on the same question. "It is always best on these occasions," said the immortal Mr. Pickwick, "to do what the mob does."—"But suppose there are two mobs?"—"Shout with the largest," replied Mr. Pickwick. If we read "nob" instead of "mob" in the foregoing, we will have the explanation of not a little disloyalty manifested by some clerics to the Church and the Holy See.

One too familiar instance of the lack of true loyalty to all that Rome and the Vatican stand for in Catholic thought is the question, "What do the Pope and the heads of those Roman Congregations understand about conditions in this country?" The suggestion is, of course, that there can be only one answer, "Little or nothing." Equally of course, the answer is grotesquely incorrect. It is tolerably certain that, nine times out of ten, or rather ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the conditions in this country are both far better known and immeasurably better understood by the Church authorities in Rome than by the not too reverent cleric who more or less flippantly asks the question. After all, the man seated on

the summit of a lofty tower may reasonably be credited with a somewhat wider outlook than that of the sitter in a valley or a well; and if the comparatively obscure parish priest imagines that the White Shepherd of Christiandom ignores the currents of ecclesiastical, or even political, social, and industrial thought in the United States, he is less conversant with the universality of the Church and the universal character of the information reaching the Holy Father than is at all to his credit. It is not impossible indeed that Rome may know considerably more about the critic's own personality than he is aware of or can conceive to be likely.

To broach another phase of our subject: thoroughgoing loyalty is due to the Church not only when she is exercising her *potestas magisterii,*—preaching Christ's doctrines, denouncing heresies, and settling disputes on matters of faith; not only when she is showing forth her *potestas jurisdictionis,*—in governing the faithful, in laying down laws and watching over the manner in which they are observed, and in punishing transgressors; but also when she is exercising her *potestas ordinis* in offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in administering sacraments and using sacramentals. Discussing the Liturgy, the Rev. Dr. Scannell (in "The Priest's Studies") says: "I take it for granted that a priest will say his Mass, recite his Office, and administer the Sacraments with due attention to all the regulations prescribed by the Church." Is it uncharitable to suggest that there are some priests concerning whom

he is taking too much for granted? "All the regulations prescribed by the Church" is a comprehensive phrase, and includes a number of minor points and niceties of rubrical requirements, belief in the universal carrying out of which implies an unusually optimistic temperament. If we suppose a priest to be thoroughly loyal to the Church, obeying her every behest not merely with fidelity but with superadded love, then indeed we may look for the most exact observance of all her rites and ceremonies ordained by her, and look, too, for a full knowledge of the history and symbolism of those rites and ceremonies, as for an adequate appreciation of their meaning and their beauty.

Can it be truthfully affirmed that such loyalty is the rule, rather than the exception, among the priests of our acquaintance? Does the average cleric with whom we habitually come in contact manifest almost scrupulous care in obeying the least of the rubrics, in observing the minor details of the multiplied rites and ceremonies involved in the celebration of Mass or in the administration of the Sacraments? And can he give you offhand either an illuminating explanation of their significance or an intelligent summary of their history? Yet to ask this much from a commissioned officer in the Church's army is surely not to make an exorbitant demand on his time or good-will. "Wherever," writes Father Müller, "there are love and reverence, we may feel assured, not only of a perfect acquaintance with the symbolism of the holy rites and holy vestments, but of that profound attention and devotion which

the august Sacrifice should demand and inspire." And the same author asks the entirely pertinent questions: "Have I entertained for the rubrics and ceremonies the respect due to the divine authority from which they emanate and to the object for which they have been ordained? Have I shown this respect by studying them and committing them to memory and by observing them faithfully? If it is a shame for a soldier not to know the rules of military drill; if it is a disgrace for a person of high standing not to be acquainted with the rules of etiquette, it is certainly a greater shame for a priest not to know the rubrics respecting the proper behavior in the sanctuary, and the dispensation of the divine mysteries."

If ignorance of the rubrics be, as the author just quoted says with truth, shameful in a priest, non-observance of rubrics which he knows is assuredly not less reprehensible. Yet it is hardly a phenomenal occurrence for a priest to neglect a minor, or supposedly minor, prescription of the rubrics, on the plea ofttimes that it is purely directive, and consequently does not oblige under pain of sin. Needless to say such a plan eliminates at once any question of loyalty to the Church. If love of our Spiritual Mother enters, as we have said, into our conception of priestly loyalty to her and to her ordinances, there can be no degree of the noble quality in him who grudgingly gives her only that amount of service which he cannot withhold without incurring the displeasure of God. What would be said of the loyalty of a mere human friend whose af-

fection or esteem was measured by a similar scale, whose friendliness bore a direct proportion to his own interest, and ceased when that interest was in any degree endangered? Genuine love does not act in this calculating manner; it gives unstintedly of its service, and joys in the giving. And not until we love the Church in verity and in deed, envisaging her as our most lovable and gracious Mother who is forever lavishing upon us, her chosen sons, the choicest favors and blessings, shall we acquit ourselves with even approximate worthiness of the various daily duties she assigns to us in virtue of her *potestas ordinis*, not until then shall we perform the august functions of celebrating her adorable Sacrifice and administering her grace-laden Sacraments with congruous reverence, completeness, and exactitude.

Mere lip-loyalty to Mother Church and her visible head on earth is as easy as it is inadequate. Any one of us can sound their praises in grandiloquent phraseology in a special sermon on the feast of Pentecost or at a corner-stone laying or a dedication, just as we can expatiate at length on their glorious prerogatives and their magnificent services to humanity, should we be called on to respond to a toast in their honor, or to prepare a conference-paper on the subject; but heart-loyalty implies far more than such occasional expressions of fidelity and allegiance. It is a permanent fire illuming and warming our habitual everyday existence, permeating each of our priestly activities, and radiating its beneficent influence on all with whom we come in contact. It

manifests itself in a hundred diverse ways,—in the interest we express in all that relates to the Church's larger affairs, and in the pains we take to have our people contribute generously to the Peter's Pence and collections for the seminary and the missions; in the protests we voice against unjust encroachments on the rights of the Vatican, and in the zeal we display in fostering the growth of the Catholic press; in the building of church or school or convent for the extension of religious work, and in the care with which we observe each little rubric in saying Mass or reciting the office; in our public denunciation of professed enemies of the Faith, and in our private remonstrance to a brother priest who speaks with undue levity of Rome's policy and tactics; in our untiring efforts to make our parishioners genuinely worthy children of Holy Church, and especially in our persevering daily and hourly endeavors to intensify our personal interior life and attain a more and more intimate union with God.

XIII

THE VIOLET STOLE

Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.—*St. John: xx, 23.*

If we had good confessors everywhere, we would soon see a complete reform in the world.—*Pope Pius V.*

As when a cautious mother deems her boy
In peril of a fall, she loudly chides,
Yet when he falls full quickly lifts him up,
Prompt pardon grants unto the weeping child,
And fondly kisses all his tears away;
So let the priest rebuke each erring one,
Yet kindly lift the sinner fallen low.
To fall but human is; to rise, divine:
Who stretches forth in love a helping hand
To raise the prostrate doth an angel's part.
So wish, so order I, the clergy's Queen,
That pastors ever greet with kindly yearning
Each truant member to the fold returning.
—*From the Latin of Father Alizeri, C. M.*

NO man cares to be told that in the estimation of his fellows he is inclined to take himself too seriously. The implication that he cherishes an altogether exaggerated sense of his own importance and deems himself a considerably more potent factor in the effective control and smooth running of the world in general and his own town, city, or State in particular than is really the case is a blow to his vanity, that unlovely quality or character which a contemporary essayist declares to be as common as fingers. It is questionable, however, whether taking one's self too seriously is on the whole either so grave or so prevalent a fault as is the opposite characteristic

of taking one's self too flippantly. There can be no doubt indeed that most men do not take seriously enough into consideration the influence, good or bad, of their individual example among those with whom they habitually come in contact. And it is equally indubitable that some men are endowed with powers so extraordinary and entrusted with functions so sublime that it is difficult to conceive of their attaching undue importance to their responsibilities. In so far as the clergy are concerned, it is probable that the average priest is so little prone to take himself and his various duties too seriously that he may well be reminded from time to time of the incomparable dignity of his calling and the danger of his taking all too lightly the various tremendously important duties connected therewith.

In the matter of the violet stole, for instance, does the ordinary pastor who spends a considerable number of hours per week, if not per day, in the confessional, habitually take thought of the transcendant import of the function of which he acquits himself as often as he puts that stole upon his shoulders and sits down to listen to the penitent sinners who come to him as the direct and divinely delegated representative of God Himself? Does he sufficiently often recall the awful reverence and impressive solemnity of his sentiments on that fateful morning when he felt the ordaining bishop's hands upon his head and heard the prelate say: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained?" Does he, occasionally, at least, divest

his mind of routinism or automatism, dip below the surface of his more or less frivolous thoughts, and meditate in all seriousness his prerogative of forgiving sins? His exercising the prerogative is an ordinary, everyday, commonplace occurrence; and for that very reason he is all the more apt to minimize its gravity and lose sight of the fact that it is not less marvelous than it is common.

The more one ponders over the absolving power vested in the priest and weighs its full import and extent, the more one is impressed with the magnitude of the responsibility as well as the dignity of our vocation, and the less danger one runs of incurring the anathema, *Maledictus qui facit opus Dei negligenter.* Small wonder that the unbelieving Scribes, when they saw that power exercised by the first Christian Priest in favor of the man sick with the palsy, exclaimed: "He blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins, but God only?" If one of us, by merely raising his hand in blessing, could transform a dreary tract of sodden quagmire or marsh into a flower garden of surpassing loveliness, or change with equal facility a foul cesspool into a sparkling fountain of living water, there is no question that we ourselves and all who might witness our act would be stupendously impressed by the sight; yet we are fully aware that such a transformation would be incomparably less wonderful than the change actually wrought in the sinner when the priest pronounces the words of absolution, and the soul, blacker than ebony or coal, is forthwith made whiter than the lily or the driven snow.

The beneficiary of a powerful agent is per-

haps more likely to appreciate the power at its proper worth than is the agent himself, who exercises it as a matter of course and in a manner possibly more perfunctory than earnest; and accordingly the average priest may more accurately estimate the surpassing value of absolution in the rôle of penitent than in that of confessor. Let us take a concrete case. Suppose the reader of this page, a priest, has the misfortune to fall a victim within the next twenty-four hours to a serious accident or a fatal epidemic. You are taken to a hospital, are examined, and are told as mercifully as may be that your course is run, that your life is rapidly ebbing away, that in an hour or two at the latest you will have breathed your last. Fast on that terrifying information there comes (to suppose the improbable) the appalling thought that you are guilty of at least one mortal sin. Now, more than ever before in life, you need the exercise of some beneficent power to relieve the anguish of your soul. Who will supply it? Who, be its agent?

In the estimation of our twentieth-century world, the pre-eminent power on earth is wealth. Well, let there come to your bedside the moneyed men of your district, the millionaires of your State, or the multi-millionaires,—Rothschilds, Carnegies, and Rockefellers,—of international renown. And what can they do for you? Remove, it may be, some minor care by assuring you that some dependent of yours will be provided for; but in the matter of your one overwhelming woe, they can do absolutely nothing. What of the civil power of organized society? Let there be

brought into your chamber of death the mayor of your city, the governor of your State, the president of the Republic; and what can *they* do for you? The governor and president have, it is true, in certain conjunctures, the power of life and death. They can pardon the perpetrators of death-deserving crimes against State or federal laws; but with regard to the pardon for which you are longing with an agony of desire, they are as impotent as a babe in arms. "Knowledge is power," declare the advocates of human learning. So be it. Let there come to your death-bed the most erudite scholars, the most eminent scientists, the subtlest philosophers, the sublimest poets, the very master-minds of the world in literature, art, and science,—and what can *they* do for you? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

Let there enter representatives of a different class,—pious, God-fearing neighbors, venerable Religious Brothers many of whose faith-ruled, unobtrusive, hidden lives are among the sweetest poems that humanity sings to its Maker; or the most saintly of those holy Sisters whose virginal hearts are so often crystal chalices brimming over with the consecrated nectar of love divine,—and what can these do for you? Something at least. They can pray for you, can beg God's mercy on your terrified soul; but that is all. The one tremendous burden of sin under which you are weighed down they are utterly powerless to remove. Turn from earth to Heaven. Let the miraculous occur, saints and angels entering your chamber. Let your eyes behold the great pre-

cursor of Our Lord, him of whom Christ Himself said: "Amen, I say to you, amongst those that are born of woman, there is not a greater than John the Baptist." Near him let there stand the foster-father of Jesus, the patron of a happy death, St. Joseph. Near him again let there be the mightiest of the angelic hosts, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and Raphael. Once more, what can these do for you? Nothing different in kind from what your earthly friends can do. They can pray that your sins *may be forgiven,* but to forgive them is beyond the power of the greatest of them all. Nay, let there join the group around your death-couch the peerless Queen of saints and angels, the Immaculate Mother of God, herself. Not even she can do more than pray, than intercede for your pardon. Powerful, almost all-powerful as is her intercession, still it *is* intercession only: she cannot remit your sins.

And now, into that chamber where the representatives of all this varied power and might stand helpless to render you the one service of which you are in such awful need, let there come one of your brother priests. Let him be, if you will, the youngest in years, the least prepossessing in features, the most deficient in culture, the most wanting in natural ability and acquired science, and even the least noted for piety of all the eighteen thousand clerics scattered through this country,—and what can *he* do for you? Ah, rather, what can he *not* do for you? With the light of hope transfiguring your visage, you whisper a few words into his ear; and raising his hand

above you, he says, not "I will pray God to remit your sins," not "I will beseech our Heavenly Father to pardon your transgressions;" but, with the tranquil assurance of conscious power: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." At his wondrous word your burden vanishes, death is robbed of its terrors, and your soul goes confidently forth to meet its Judge, for you know that your sins are as certainly forgiven as if that very Judge, Jesus Christ Himself, stood at your side, and personally assured you of His pardon.

Yes, this power over the mystic body of Our Lord which we exercise in the confessional is a truly marvelous one, and there is little danger of our exaggerating the care and attention and earnestness with which we habitually acquit ourselves of so really Godlike a function. The genuine danger is all the other way; that we may come to regard the hearing of confessions simply as an unavoidable and unwelcome part of our day's work, may perform the work in a hurried, perfunctory, or careless fashion, may even neglect to take the proper means of fitting ourselves for the adequate and effective administration of the sacrament of penance. And just here it may be well to remark that the mere fact of our having passed successful examinations in moral theology before we were ordained and annually for five years after our ordination, or our having possessed "faculties" and exercised the ministry of the stole for fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, do not of themselves constitute unimpeachable

guarantees that we are as well versed in theological science as thoroughly competent confessors ought to be.

The general principles of moral theology may be immutable, but the application of those principles to an almost infinite variety of particular cases is not a matter to be mastered by an ordinary mind in a three, four, or six years' course in a seminary when one is in one's early twenties. The fact is that, unless the priest keeps up his study, not only of moral theology itself, but of other branches of theological science as well, he is more than likely to become in the course of years defective rather than proficient in the knowledge congruous, not to say essential, in a confessor. Years of experience in hearing penitents may very well increase one's aptitude in showing one's self a kindly father without thereby adding to one's competency either as a just judge or a prudent physician; and, to acquit himself worthily of his task, the confessor must be efficient in each of these characters. To declare with more or less flippancy that, after all, moral theology is merely a matter of common sense applied to specific cases of conscience is to enunciate a distinct fallacy if by "common sense" is meant the practical judgment common to the greater part of mankind,—as will become evident to any reader who peruses a few pages of no matter what volume of "Cases of Conscience."

Instead of relying on the store of theological knowledge acquired in the seminary, the judicious cleric, and more especially the cleric who habitu-

ally exercises the ministry of the stole, does as does the conscientious physician or lawyer,—he keeps himself posted on the latest developments of his special science. He not only re-reads old theologies and new, but he subscribes for and attentively peruses such periodicals as professedly deal with sacerdotal science in general and moral questions in particular. We all know the dictum of St. Alphonsus, "Nullus confessarius intermittere debet theologiae moralis studium," and most priests who follow his advice will acknowledge that such study is necessary not only to learn what we have never known but to recall what we may have forgotten. In declaring, a few moments ago, that the judicious cleric reads and re-reads old theologies and new, we had in mind a reflection made by a writer whose long years on the mission entitle him to some prestige as a practical adviser on priestly topics, Canon Keatinge. He says: "The most recent books appeal to us most strongly. The more nearly a book approaches our own time the more readily is it likely to appreciate the particular form of difficulty which besets us, and its answer tends to satisfy us, not necessarily because it is more lax, but because it grasps better a situation that did not exist when the older theologians wrote. Hence, while I should take my principles from the giants of theology—De Lugo, St. Thomas, Suarez—I am inclined to seek at the lips of the latest of their disciples who can get an *imprimatur* the practical application of these principles to our present needs."

Very little reflection on the part of a middle-aged confessor is needed to convince him that there are not a few moral problems confronting him today which in their present specific form did not exist when he left the seminary; and while it is true that their solution eventually harks back to the general principles in which he was then proficient, he would be perhaps rather rash than prudent to trust to his personal application of those principles instead of consulting approved authors and being guided by their teaching. The business world, for instance, with its new developments in speculation, its dealings in options and "futures;" the complicated questions involved in fire and life insurance; the many-sided issues arising from the ever-varying relations between capital and labor; and all such like matters need specialized treatment by a thoroughly trained theological expert in order that they may become clear to the ordinary priest who is apt to have them brought to his notice in the confessional. There are, too, new Bulls and Decrees by Sovereign Pontiffs, decisions by Roman Congregations, etc., that admittedly stand in need of expert interpretation—recent matrimonial legislation, for instance—and as the confessor is obliged in conscience to know their correct meaning, he must obviously seek the sources, the theological periodicals, in which that meaning is set forth.

Apropos of recent decrees, the *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, authoritatively endorsed by Pius X., in December, 1905, is perhaps as revolutionary a

piece of legislation affecting the confessor as has been enacted in centuries. Its declarations concerning frequent and daily Communion, with the subsequent provisions regarding the Communion of children, postulate a somewhat radical departure from the practice hitherto advocated by pastors or obtaining among their parishioners. It is not at all surprising that, among the first reflections made by the parochial clergy on reading the decree was the thought: "That means an enormous increase in my work;" nor will it be considered very uncharitable to suggest that possibly that same consideration explains why not all pastors evince noticeable zeal in advising their flocks to accede to the desire of the Sovereign Pontiff by approaching the Holy Table several times a week if not every day. That multiplied Communions presuppose multiplied confessions, necessitating a considerable number of hours daily in the confessional, may seem at first blush a mere truism, but in reality it is merely a specious fallacy. The zealous pastor who is never weary of counselling his people to acquire the habit of daily Communion may very properly accompany his counsel with the correct doctrine and practice as to the preliminary confession required therefor. By dint of reiterating the truth that sacramental confession is necessary only when the penitent is guilty of a mortal sin, and that one may congruously approach the Holy Table every day while going to confession only every week, or even more rarely, he will ultimately impress upon their minds the fact that their

previous notions on the subject were quite as erroneous as were their ideas concerning the supposed lack of reverence manifested in the frequent reception of Holy Communion.

To object that "You can't get it into the people's heads that it is right to go to the Communion rail without having, that morning or the evening before at the furthest, paid a visit to 'the box,'" is to accuse the said people of a degree of stupidity or stubborness which is assuredly non-existent. It may of course take some little time for them to rid themselves of their former habit of confessing prior to each Communion, just as it has taken or is taking time for them to get over their reluctance to communicate more frequently than once a month or once a week; but there can be no question that when the Church's doctrine on the matter is clearly expounded to them with such insistence as their conduct seems to call for, they will make their practice conform thereto. At the same time the zealous pastor should make it abundantly clear that he is not dissuading his flock from confessions which are even doubtfully necessary, and, no matter what may be his private reasons for advising against the entirely unnecessary ones, he will do well to eschew any reference to the trouble and inconvenience he undergoes in hearing them. If indeed he is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ, his personal inconvenience will be the last thing he will think of in connection with administering the sacrament of penance, remembering that St. Francis of Sales used

to say that of all offices the office of confessor is the most important as well as the most difficult.

And yet there are times when the personal equation should be taken account of, even if, on the surface, the confessor appears to be consulting his own comfort and ease rather than the need or convenience of his people. Every priest knows, and every writer on the priesthood admits, that to remain in the confessional listening uninterruptedly to penitents for five or six consecutive hours, or longer, is a wearisome ordeal for both mind and body. Those priests who give missions in large parishes can best testify to the genuine hardship of the work; and most clerics have had sufficient experience with Christmas, Easter, First Friday, and Forty Hours confessions to corroborate their testimony. Now, while there may be no particular reason why priests should not have occasional periods of hard work, there is nothing gained by such a prolongation of exhaustive labor as lessens their efficiency in the performance of that work. With all due submission to older and wiser heads, the present writer ventures the opinion that, in the interests of the penitents themselves, however great the crowd of them may be, the confessor should, at intervals of two and a half or three hours, interrupt his work for the space of fifteen or twenty minutes in order to go outside and take a welcome dose of fresh air. The apparent loss of time resulting from such a practice would be apparent only; in reality the quantity of his work would be very little, if at all, diminished, and its quality would very certainly be considerably improved.

Nor need there be any fear that the people would misunderstand such action or attribute thereto any other than the genuine motive that inspires it. If the leader of the missionary band or the pastor of the parish would announce simply and plainly that, in order to secure the best possible results and give thoroughly efficient service, the confessors would limit their continuous hearing to two or three hours and resume it after an interval of fifteen minutes spent in the open air for the purpose of preventing headaches and dullness and lassitude, the innovation would probably be accepted without the slightest criticism or grumbling. The philosophy of the matter is that a man, be he confessor or other intellectual laborer, can do more and better work when he is in good condition, fresh and invigorated, than when he is tired and nearly exhausted. Applied on a smaller scale, it is the philosophy of the distinguished physician who declares: "It is possible to do a year's work in ten months, and perhaps in eleven; but it can't possibly be done in twelve." As against such philosophy and the practical application we have made of it the reader may oppose the example of that exemplary pastor, the Curé d'Ars, who heard confessions for eighteen or twenty hours daily; but the Venerable Vianney was an exceptional pastor in a good many respects, and he performed other miracles as well as that one.

One characteristic, by the way, which uniformly distinguished the Curé d'Ars in the confessional, and which is more imitable by the con-

fessors of our day than is his practically continuous wearing of the violet stole, was his gentleness and patience with his penitents. If there is one place in the church wherein, more than in any other, the priest should show himself in very deed and truth "another Christ,"—kind and merciful and benignant and long-suffering—it is assuredly the confessional. There, if anywhere, he should appear in the character or guise (even if it has to be assumed) of a veritable man of God, the direct and specific representative of God Himself. Clothed with the violet stole, the pastor who may be, by nature, of an irascible, harsh, unsympathetic temperament, is bound to do violence to his nature and, for the nonce at least, manifest unvarying amiability and patience. It is gratifying to know that, in actual practice, such curbing of one's natural propensities is common. Many a pastor has the reputation of being rather forbidding and stern in all other circumstances, but kind and gentle to his penitents,—a lion in the house or office, a lamb in the confessional.

Obviously there may be extremes of complacency, even to penitents; firmness as well as kindness must be shown; but one point of which the confessor should never lose sight is that, ultra-exceptional cases apart, the very presence of the penitent in the confessional is presumptive evidence of the worthiness, or at least the quasi-worthiness, of his dispositions. The average sinner who kneels at the feet of a priest is in very truth a bruised reed, and the priest may well remember that it was prophesied of Christ, whose place he

is taking and whose power he is wielding: "The bruised reed he shall not break."

Not bruised reeds, however, but rather upright and sweet-scented grass-blades form the bulk of the material with which the ordinary confessor has to do, especially in these days of frequent and daily Communion. Confessions of devotion rather than of necessity were always common in the history of the Church, and henceforth presumably will be even more multiplied than ever. One obvious reflection which accordingly presents itself is that the words of instruction or encouragement given to the individual penitent in these devotional confessions should be brief, much briefer as a rule than those addressed to the penitent who has accused himself of grievous sins. It may perhaps be imprudent to make a practice of merely giving absolution and imposing a penance, but on the other hand there is wisdom in this counsel of a writer whom we have already quoted: "At all times mere commonplaces of piety are useless. Let us speak by all means if we have something to say, but not merely to say something." In declaring that our words on such occasions should be briefer than to penitents who have confessed grievous sins, we used above the qualifying phrase "as a rule;" for it must be borne in mind that some purely devotional penitents look for, and have a right to expect, fuller advice or instruction or admonition than is due to the common run of our spiritual children. They are those who are making distinct and energetic efforts to advance in the way

of Christian perfection and who consequently seek skilled guidance along the various avenues of the interior life.

Properly to aid such souls the confessor needs to be conversant with the principles of ascetical theology and to have at least a fair working-knowledge of the manner in which those principles should be applied to concrete cases. And here we touch again on the competency of the priest adequately to exercise the function of the violet stole. Is the average reader of these pages so thoroughly versed in ascetical theology that it would be a mere waste of time for him to devote an occasional hour or two to a review of its principles? Possibly he is. If indeed there be no exaggeration in the statement, regarding the confessor's fitness, which I find in a brochure published four or five years ago, our "possibly" may be replaced by "probably." Of the confessor in general the brochure says: "He spends many years in preparation for his priestly office. He studies philosophy, dogmatic, scientific, and moral theology; but, above and beyond all this, he studies mystic and ascetical theology, which every confessor must know according to the spiritual wants of his penitents." Let us trust that the latter half of the foregoing sentence is literally true of present-day theological students, and that those of us whose knowledge of ascetics has been acquired rather incidentally than otherwise may avow ourselves not too old to learn and forthwith set about attaining *quantum sufficit* for the intelligent direction of souls whenever we don the violet stole.

XIV

AT THE CLERICAL CLUB

Keep company with good men and good men you'll imitate. —*Chinese Proverb.*

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.—*Ps. cxxxii, 1.*

Fulfill ye my joy, that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment.—*Phillip. ii, 2.*

IN more than one respect the Dors club is a somewhat peculiar association. To begin wth, membershp therein is restricted not only to priests, but to such priests as actually are, or formerly have been, pastors or assistants at St. Joseph's Church in an American city whose name really doesn't matter, although readers who like definite terminology may call it, if they will, Anyopolis. In the second place, the association has no fixed and determined club-house or club-rooms; its meetings are held in any one of half a dozen different rectories. Its favorite habitat, to be sure, is Father John Regan's smoking-room in St. Joseph's parish-house; but a majority vote of the members at one meeting may decide that the next one shall be held in the rectory of either Dean O'Reilly, Father Tim Hogan, Monsignor Eversley, Father Larry Dempsey, or any other member resident in the city. There are no initiation fees, and no annual or monthly dues; there is no written constitution and no fixed by-law, if

we except a custom that has come to have a quasi-legal force: any member may, without violation of "good form," contribute from time to time to the common stock of smoking material a box of his favorite brand of cigars or a tin of his best-loved mixture,—Craven, Arcadia, or other.

As for the name of the Club, invidious outsiders have been known to suggest that Dors is merely an inflection of the French verb *dormir*, to sleep, and add that it is peculiarly significant of the Club's principal business. Others derive the word from *dorsal* or *dorse*, and assert that it is indicative of the backward or reactionary tendency of the Club's members. Neither explanation, 'tis needless to say, is correct. When the charter members of the association were deliberating as to the specific name that should be given to it, Father Dempsey had urged the adoption of as comprehensive a designation as possible, one that would cover all topics that might come up for discussion,—theological, philosophical, literary, scientific, artistic, political, commercial, or any other kind. "In that case," commented Father John, "we had better call it the De Omni Re Scibili Club;" and forthwith the title which Pico of Mirandola gave to one of his multitudinous theses became the accepted cognomen of the associated clerics of St. Joseph's. Being rather cumbersome for common use, the title was speedily reduced to the "D.O.R.S. Club," and this in turn gave way to the present simplified form, the Dors Club. Conformably to its name, the

Club considers no subject foreign to its deliberations; but as the main purpose of the association is recreative, it was unanimously resolved, in the autumn of 1914, that all war-talk should be tabooed at its meetings.

These useful preliminary notions being given, the reader is invited to attend a session of the Club in Father John's smoking-room,—or part of a session, rather, as conversation has been going on for some time already when we make our entrance. The direct dialogue form is adopted as being clearer and more vivacious than the indirect narrative style.

Fr. O'Connor. So you really think, Father Larry, that the slogan, "See America first," may well be disregarded by priests who have an opportunity to travel.

Fr. Dempsey. Most decidedly I do. The great objective point of young priests who have a vacation a month or two long should be Rome. Every cleric who has the opportunity to do so should visit the Eternal City as soon after his ordination as possible. Several weeks spent there will, if at all judiciously employed, teach him more things about the Church—intangible, undefinable things that you simply *can't* get out of books or through oral instruction, than he will acquire in a dozen vacations spent in traveling from Atlanta to Alaska, or from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon.

Mgr. Eversley. I am quite of your opinion, Larry. Rome is really the home-city of all Catholics, and a priest's first visit to St. Peter's

and the Vatican is something more than a mere event,—it is a veritable epoch. As you say, too, one imbibes there knowledge unattainable elsewhere. The atmosphere of the city of the Popes defies analysis, but it is an atmosphere that is both singularly fascinating and wonderfully illuminative. One's mind and heart receive ineffaceable impressions, and ever afterwards the inestimable worth of our Christian heritage, the matchless sublimity of the one true faith, the magnificently triumphant career of the Church throughout the centuries, and something of the significance of the rôle played by Christ's Vicars in the development of civilization, appeal to one with a force and a vividness practically unknown to those who have never visited the Eternal City.

Fr. Lavers. Say, Monsignor, have another cigar. Was that spiel quoted from an old lecture or a forthcoming book? If the latter, put me down for a copy; 'tis good stuff.

Fr. John. Tommy, boy, close your irreverent lips, and have some respect for your elders. As one of them, let me add my advice to all you younger men who as yet are strangers to Rome: get there as soon as you can.

Fr. Galligan. Like a whole lot of advice, Father John, that counsel is a good deal easier for you pastors to give than for us assistants to follow. Unless there is a notable—and altogether unexpected—rise in my salary, I fail to see how it will be practicable for me to make a trip to Rome for a dozen years to come.

Fr. Dempsey. Well, *I* went in my fourth year as assistant; and our salaries twenty years ago were even less than you fellows get to-day.

Fr. Lavers. But there's the higher cost of living today.

Fr. Dempsey. Which is nullified by your increased salaries; and there's the cost of higher living which it is quite within your competency to cut down very considerably.

Dean O'Reilly. Even so, Father Dempsey, it appears to me that you must have been phenomenally economical to save, in three or four years as assistant, enough to defray the expenses of a European trip. May I ask how you managed it?

Fr. Dempsey. Quite simply, and without depriving myself of any of life's essentials, or even comforts. To begin with, instead of investing half or quarter of my salary in a private library which I really didn't need at the time since I had the run of good old Father McGovern's—God rest his charitable soul!—I deposited every quarter at least some amount in a Savings Bank. Instead of paying five or six dollars a pair for the latest thing in shoes, I paid only two or three for foot-gear not perhaps so stylish but quite decent, fully as comfortable, and considerably more serviceable. Ditto as to hats and gloves, shirts and socks. As for smoking, a briar pipe and ordinary tobacco formed the rule; cigars were the exception, and when I did buy a box, they were of the nickel variety, not the ten-cent brands.

These and the like economies,—saving car-fare, for instance, by habitual walking, mount up more rapidly than you may imagine. In any case, in three years and a half my Bank account was amply large enough to allow me a two months' sojourn in Europe,—and I didn't go across in the steerage, either.

Fr. Lavers. Bully for you, Father Larry! Here's a lad who is going to do likewise. Dean, if you are still fortunate enough to have me as one of your assistants three years from now, will you kindly make a note of it that I expect two months off in June, 1923, for a trip to Rome?

Dean O'Reilly. If the Bishop hasn't compassion on me before that date, Father Tom, I'll welcome the opportunity to send you on your travels, never fear.

Fr. O'Connor. You had an audience with Leo XIII. on the occasion of that first visit of yours, hadn't you, Father Larry?

Fr. Dempsey. Yes; but that's an old story and a long one, too. I'm not going to monopolize the conversation this evening.

Fr. Lavers. That reminds me of a saying of Dean Swift's that I saw quoted the other day. Apropos of conversation, he said: "Take as many half minutes as you can get, but never talk more than half a minute without pausing and giving others an opportunity to strike in."

Fr. John. Very good, Tommy, and, as your half minute is up, allow me to strike in by asking Father Dempsey what language he spoke in conversing with the Holy Father.

Fr. Dempsey. I fell back on my French, such of it as I had picked up during my seminary days in Montreal. 'Twas a good thing I did, too; for the experience of two young pastors from Pittsburg who had just preceded me at the feet of the Pope showed pretty clearly that Americanized Latin was practically unintelligible at the Vatican.

Mgr. Eversley. I had just the same experience; and, ever since, I have been a firm advocate of the teaching of the Italian pronunciation of Latin in our seminaries.

Dean O'Reilly. But hasn't it been proved that the really correct pronunciation of that language is the "old Roman," with the hard g's and c's,—*Prokedamus in pake, Sancta Kikilia,* etc.?

Mgr. Eversley. As for the historical, grammatical, or logical correctness of the pronunciation. I don't profess any competency to judge; but as for the expediency of teaching our young clerics the only pronunciation likely to be of use to them if they are ever called upon to speak Latin at all, it seems to me that the case for the Italian method is self-evident.

Fr. Galligan. Your view is coincided in by some of the prelates of this country and Canada, too, Monsignor. I have heard that several have made the Italian pronunciation compulsory in their seminaries.

Fr. Hogan. Speaking of boots—*you'll* understand the allusion, Dempsey—have any of you chaps heard of the good joke played on our new Monsignor, Charlie Bradley.

Fr. John. *I* haven't, for one; what is it?

Fr. Hogan. Well, the morning the papers published the news of the distinction that had come to Bradley, his friend Father Kevin, President of St. Isidore's, sent him a wire. Kevin wrote the message: "Cordial congratulations. You adorn the purple," and the inspired Western Union operator sent it: "Cordial congratulations. You *adore* the purple." Not bad, eh?

Fr. McGarrigle. Has it ever occurred to any of you reverend gentlemen that, if Rome keeps up the present rate of multiplying Monsignors, a black cassock will be a rarity in the course of two or three decades? It isn't considered good form nowadays, apparently, for an ordinary to visit the Holy See without recommending three or four of his pastors for the purple.

Fr. Lavers. That's right, George. It looks as though it will soon be in order to say of U.S. priests and the Monsignorship what Mark Twain said of Frenchmen and the Cross of the Legion of Honor: "Very few of them escape it."

Fr. John. Well, neither of you two need entertain any serious fear of being obliged to change your cassock's color. Given that our Bishop retains his normal good sense, both of you may consider yourselves immune.

Dean O'Reilly.. Seriously though, Father John; don't you think that the purple *is* becoming so common that a good deal of the prestige once attached to it is vanishing? It certainly

doesn't mean to me nowadays as much as it did fifteen years ago when our friend Eversley here was invested with it.

Fr. John. Seriously, then, I don't think it has become a bit too common. I have heard some disgruntled clerics make the statement that not one in twelve of the recent recipients of the honor possesses any genuine distinction of character or conduct to justify his being set aside and above his brother priests; but I candidly doubt whether there be one in twelve of them who lacks such distinction. As for the men who tell you—of course I don't count you among them, O'Reilly—that, since every clerical Tom, Dick, and Harry is becoming a Monsignor, they wouldn't accept the title if proffered them, I question whether one in a hundred is really sincere. In any case the most of them would jump at the chance to accept the purple, and I think I know one or two whose delight in the honor would be so unfeigned that they'd not only wear the purple cassock by day, but would don purple pajamas at night.

Fr. Hogan. A spectacle for men and angels, that; outdoing the show of Father Laurier.

Fr. Dempsey. What was that, Tim? I don't remember hearing about it.

Fr. Hogan. Just an announcement that a French priest, doing duty in an English parish, made one Sunday at high Mass. It was about a Holy Name parade in which he himself was to take part. He urged all the members of the Society

to be present; and, waxing eloquent as he proceeded, exclaimed: "Yes, my friends, we will make one grand show, one magnificent show; we will make one *holy* show of ourselves."

Fr. Lavers. It must have been Father Laurier who as a boy in college, in reply to a classmate's threat that he'd knock his block off, passionately declared: "You can't do it; *that's* what you are!"

Fr. Hogan. Well! well! Talk about the association of ideas and the peculiarities of the faculty we call memory: do you know, that instance of broken English has dragged up from the bottom of the well of my memory, or "forgettery," an incident I haven't thought of consciously for twenty-five years. As you all know, I attended a Canadian college whose Superior's command of English wasn't exactly perfect. The choicest specimen of it that ever amused me in those days was his remark to Dan McCabe at a Christmas midnight Mass. Dan was a big awkward omadhaun of a fellow in Minor Orders, who was serving as Subdeacon. I was master of ceremonies, and during the Canon was congratulating myself that McCabe hadn't made any bad breaks as yet, when all at once my bold Dan (who was in his proper position, *in plano*), took it into his head that he ought to be alongside the celebrant, the Superior; so up he marched, paten and all. The celebrant just glanced at him sideways, and then said in a demi-tone quite audible to all in the sanctuary: "What you

want? Go down stair." I had to take a strangle hold on my risibilities to keep from laughing outright.

Mgr. Eversley. I remember a case in which even a strangle hold could not restrain a laugh in church. At St. Michael's college in my time we carried out all the ceremonies of Holy Saturday. The chanting of the Prophecies by the members of the staff, including seminarians or "ecclesiastics," was always safe to provide a respite from the monotony of the long service; and on one occasion came near getting one of my chums, Frank Laferty, into a serious scrape. The third Prophecy had just been splendidly chanted by Mr. Lafond, a slim little fellow not more than five feet two in height, but with a fine, powerful bass voice that might have congruously come from a giant. The next chanter was a Mr. Mellott, six feet three in his vamps, and proportionately bulky. His ordinary speaking voice was of the thinnest, and his tone in chanting proved to be the merest squeak, like the cry of a captured mouse, or the sound of escaping gas. Accordingly, his *In diebus illis* was greeted with a broad smile from the students generally, and Laferty simply exploded in a veritable guffaw.

Fr. Galligan. Say, Father John, before this tide of reminiscences becomes irresistible, I'd like you to advise me on a point about which I've been thinking a good deal of late. I have recently been reading about the advantages attached to having a hobby; and I'd like to have

your opinion concerning a good one to choose.

Fr. John. Father Charlie, my son, if I were as young as you, I should not hesitate a moment about making my choice; my hobby would be writing. I'd write all my sermons to begin with; and then I'd try sketches, essays, sermonettes, stories, and what not for the diocesan paper. If they were accepted by the editor of that journal, I should offer something to more ambitious periodicals, such as our Catholic family magazines; and in case I made good with *them,* I should be emboldened to proffer an article once in a while to the ecclesiastical monthlies. If I had the knack of rhyming, I should follow Silas Wegg's plan and drop into poetry occasionally, if only to increase my vocabulary. Yes; let me advise you to take up writing. Even if you have no particular taste for it, and have no style to speak of, still "go to it." One learns to write by writing; and a priest need look for no better hobby on which to spend his hours of leisure.

Fr. Dempsey. Well said, Father John. I've often envied the fellows who could wield a facile and a graceful pen. Just think of the consolation one could draw from the thought that, even when the body has fallen into "the sere and yellow leaf," when a man is physically incapable of general pastoral work, he can still profitably pass his time in writing for others from the garnered stores of his long and varied experience.

Dean O'Reilly. Do you know, I've often thought that an ideal life for an old priest, one who has reached, let us say, his three score years and twenty, would be, supposing him a writer, a chaplaincy in some small convent. With only a minimum of clerical work to vary the monotony of life, what an amount of leisure he would have to devote to literary labors! Our old pastor is right, Father Charlie; you can't do better than make a hobby of writing.

Fr. Lavers. If you gentlemen will permit me to interject a purely frivolous question into your grave discourse, I should like to know which misguided member of the Club is responsible for the introduction here of this cylindrical bit of disguised alfalfa and mildewed mucilage that I've been trying to smoke for the past ten minutes. I see the legend on the box from which I took it reads "Radella." Who may its sponsor be?

Fr. Hogan. Poor Lavers! You have so vitiated your taste with those Wiltville stogies you are accustomed to, that you can no longer recognize a good cigar when you get one. The Radella is distinctly all right. Ask McGarrigle if it isn't. He has embalmed its virtues in song.

Fr. Lavers. He has, eh? Well, this one tastes as though somebody had embalmed it in limburger cheese. However, Mac, let's have the song.

Fr. McGarrigle. Father Tim used "song" in the generic sense. My tribute was a limerick.

Here it is:

> A cigar is much like an umbrella:
> Till you try it, you can't always tell a
> Good from a bad;
> But the best to be had
> For its price is, dead sure, the Radella.

Fr. Lavers. I see. "For its price." What *is* its price, Father Tim? A dollar a thousand?

Fr. John. Have done with your nonsense, Tommy. The cigar is a fine one: I tested it, myself. To get back to writing,—tell us, Monsignor, you who are an author, yourself, what you consider the prime requisites for the formation of a good style.

Mgr. Eversley. An exhaustive knowledge of English grammar, a prolonged drilling in the construction of English sentences, and a wide and studious reading of the classic English authors.

Fr. Dempsey. Grammar! Surely every man who has gone through a college and a seminary knows his grammar.

Mgr. Eversley. Possibly he does; but in that case he occasionally fails to apply his knowledge in his speaking and writing. He splits his infinitives, mixes up his pronouns, misplaces his qualifying words, uses "and which" to connect one clause with a former one that is minus any "which," and commits many another verbal crime that jars on the cultural ear.

Dean O'Reilly. Right you are, Monsignor. There are more violations of grammar in the average sermon than is at all creditable to our cloth. Not very gross violations, perhaps, but sole-

cisms and improprieties altogether out of place in the speech of an educated man.

Fr. O'Connor. Oh, I don't know. It strikes me that there's not a little exaggeration in all this kowtowing to the arbitrary rules of grammarians. Provided there's no possible mistaking a man's meaning, the main purpose of language is served, and whether or not the hundred and one requirements of grammar are observed is, or ought to be, a negligible consideration.

Mgr. Eversley. Absurd, my dear fellow! You're talking nonsense. If you make clearness, or perfect lucidity, the sole requisite of speech, you authorize such utterly barbarous English as, "Them there cigars is certainly fine." There's no possible mistaking the meaning of that sentence; yet I presume you'd hardly justify its use in the mouth of a gentleman.

Fr. Hogan. Nor would O'Connor, in all probability, give his imprimatur to the locution of good old Father Mercier who, finding the candles unlit just as he was going to begin Mass, hunted through all his pockets and then turned to his congregation with the thoroughly lucid inquiry: "Nobody don't got some match?"

Fr. O'Connor. Oh, of course you fellows have to go to extremes.

Mgr. Eversley. Not at all, my dear Father. 'Tis your own principle that is extreme. Moreover, there's a fallacy in your phrase, "the arbitrary rules of gammarians." Those rules are not the dictates of any one man or body of men; they are merely condensed statements

of the usage of educated, reputable speakers and writers. The rules were deduced from the usage, not the usage from the rules.

Fr. Galligan. But, say. What about this split infinitive business? Why isn't it just as correct to say, "To thoroughly understand the question" as to say "Thoroughly to understand the question?" The latter form sounds to me much stiffer, rather affected, in fact.

Fr. John. In that case, you had better say, "To understand the question thoroughly." The only reason why your first form isn't correct is that good usage condemns it, just as in another sphere it condemns blowing your nose with your fingers instead of with your handkerchief.

Fr. Lavers. What will you bet me, Father John, that I can't find the split infinitive in Newman?

Fr. John. Nothing doing, Tommy. I wouldn't bet, even, that Newman never used his fingers instead of his handkerchief, in a sudden emergency. But your question is an instance of another fallacy in the matter of good English. The fact that some construction, generally condemned, may be found, perhaps once or twice, in Newman or Macaulay or Burke or Ruskin is no proof that the author in question considered the construction good; it shows merely that "Homer sometimes nods." If you can show me that Newman habitually, or even quasi-habitually, uses the split infinitive, then indeed you will have made your point. Isolated cases have no argumentative value: *parum pro nihilo reputatur.*

Fr. McGarrigle. 'Tis a good thing Father Ruddy isn't here. If he were, we'd have nothing but grammar for the rest of the session. By the way, how is he? Has any one heard?

Dean O'Reilly. Very poorly, I understand. The Chicago specialist says he has Bright's disease in a fairly advanced stage, and 'tis doubtful whether he will live another year. Poor Ruddy! God is certainly trying him.

Mgr. Eversley. Why throw the responsibility on God? Granted that Ruddy is a delightful fellow whom we all like and with whom we naturally sympathize, there's no blinking the fact that his illness is simply the inevitable effect of causes for which he himself is solely responsible. How often during the past ten years have we not told him that his manner of life would surely shorten his days! His physician warned him long ago that he could not with impunity continue to eat three hearty meals a day and neglect to take a fair amount of physical exercise; yet Harry kept on satisfying his appetite to the full while remaining almost as inactive as if he were afflicted with paralysis or locomotor ataxia. His present condition is surely not so much a trial from God as the unfailing punishment that follows violation of the laws of health. This may sound rather harsh and unfeeling, but I don't mean it to be so. I like Father Ruddy very much and he has all my sympathy; but we priests are perhaps a little too fond of blaming on God all sorts of trials that are really

only the perfectly natural results of our own imprudence. But there: I didn't intend to preach. Father Lavers, I guess I have exceeded my half minute. Hadn't you better break in?

Fr. John. We had better be thinking of breaking up. Do you see what time it is? I haven't changed my retiring hour since you boys graduated from St. Joseph's; so I'm going to pack the whole crowd of you off without further ceremony. Tommy, help yourself to the Radellas; and good-night, all.

XV

THE PRIEST'S EXEMPLAR

Wherefore I beseech you be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ.—*1 Cor. iv, 16.*

Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son.—*Rom. viii, 29.*

A Christ in rank and power—friend, 'tis meet
That thou the fair resemblance shouldst complete.
Be thine His patient pity, love, and zeal;
Be thine the wounds of aching hearts to heal;
Be thine to follow whither lost sheep roam,
And bear them kindly on thy shoulders home;
Be thine the Master's Cross with love to bear,
And thine in endless life His Crown to wear!
—*From "Between Whiles."*

IT is a rather curious anomaly that the proverb, "practice makes perfect," which we find so generally verified in the various arts of life should apparently altogether fail of application in the supreme art of living. Preliminary instruction, drill, and training, followed by years spent in the continuous exercise of any ordinary profession, business, or handicraft almost invariably produce both increased facility in doing one's work and notable skill in doing it well. If an elderly lawyer or physician or artist or banker or writer or carpenter or shoemaker achieves results that impress us as exceptionally good, a not unusual comment is: "Small blame to him; he's been at it all his life!" On the other hand, the youth and inexperience of a tyro in a profession, business, or trade we accept as a valid excuse for partial fail-

ure in achievement. In the case of life itself, however, and more specifically in the case of the interior, spiritual life, a good many of us adopt a diametrically opposite standard of criticism. In the matter of piety, fervor, devotedness to duty, and exact performance of religious exercises, we often talk as if it were quite natural and altogether reasonable that the youngest should be the best,—as if indeed the oldtime proverb needed revision and should run, "practice makes *im*-perfect."

Who has not heard the zeal and enthusiasm of a youthful cleric ridiculed and scoffed at by an elderly brother priest?—"Yes, yes, my dear fellow; you are fresh from the seminary and all these lofty aims and grand ideals are doubtless very fine; but you'll soon discover that in the actual wear and tear of daily life they will prove quite too visionary and quite impracticable. 'Tis all very well to gaze on the mountain-tops, or to hitch your wagon to a star; but before long you will learn that after all you have to keep your feet on the ground, and your daydreams will dissolve in the prosaic atmosphere of hard work." In much the same spirit an elderly religious has been heard to say: "When Brother Blank came out of the novitiate two or three years ago, he was scandalized by the least infraction of silence or any want of punctuality in attending spiritual exercises; but now he's just as bad as the rest of us." The pity of it is that such remarks are made with an air of superior wisdom as if they were merely the expression of undeniable truths taught by experi-

ence, the statement of facts that must inevitably occur as the years roll on. In reality, of course, such talk is dictated, not by superior wisdom, but by unmistakable folly.

It is doubtless true enough that one seldom if ever attains to the ideals of one's youth, and that it is characteristic of human nature, in priests as in others, to be inclined to lower one's pristine standard, especially if it was set at a notable height; but to maintain that one cannot even approximate the ideals once cherished, or that one *must,* willy-nilly, forsake the heights of fervor to descend to the dead-level of perfunctoriness or to the depths of tepidity,—this is palpably absurd. I cannot logically contend that because in my own case, and possibly in that of some of my friends, former zeal and piety have been replaced by present negligence and lukewarmness, therefore such replacement is the invariable experience of all those in holy orders. Expressly to state, or indirectly to imply, that thorough attention to the most strenuous activities of the pastoral ministry is at all incompatible with a genuinely full and deep interior life, is not only to give the lie to the records of innumerable saints, but is to accuse the Holy Ghost of demanding impossibilities.

There can be no possible doubt that God does demand sanctity or holiness of His priests. The most cursory examination of Holy Writ, whether the Old Testament or the New, suffices to make this fact superabundantly clear. "You shall be holy unto me, because I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from all other people, that

you should be mine." *Lev. xx, 26.* "They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane His name: for they offer the burnt offering of the Lord and the bread of their God, and *therefore* they shall be holy." *Lev. xxi, 6.* "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins. . . . Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." *Heb. v, 1, 4.* "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." *Matt. v, 48.* "You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain." *John, xv, 16.* "You call me master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." *John, xiii, 12.* Similar passages might be multiplied almost indefinitely, and the burden of them all is that it is incumbent upon the priest, over and above all other men, to walk circumspectly in the way of the Lord, to practice perfection, to live holily,—in brief, to be a faithful imitator of the sacerdotal Exemplar, Christ Jesus Our Lord.

All this, presumably, is trite to the ordinary pastor of souls. He has very often preached similar, not to say identical, doctrine to his people, instructing them that in order to reach heaven each of them must, in at least some measure and de-

gree, follow Christ. "Imitation of Christ" and "following Christ" are in fact among the most commonplace phrases in the Christian preacher's vocabulary,—which is quite a different thing, it is needless to say, from exemplifying the meaning of the phrases in the multitudinous thoughts and words and actions of ordinary life. It is possible indeed that even a priest may reach a point where these expressions are mere empty words, philosophical abstractions to which neither in his habitual thought nor in his daily activities are there any corresponding concrete realities. Without going to that extreme, it is still more possible for a cleric to look upon our great Exemplar as a model utterly beyond imitation, at least by himself, and to forego any really serious efforts to conform his life to that of Our Lord. Now, such an attitude is condemnable in a spiritual man, just as a similar frame of mind is condemnable in an ordinary man of the world. "Aim at perfection in everything," says Chesterfield, "even though in most things it is unattainable. However, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as beyond them."

It is an age-old lesson that the archer whose arrow is to hit the mark must aim at a point above that mark, and the masters of the interior life repeat the lesson in a hundred varying forms. The Christian who limits his aspirations and his efforts simply to the avoidance of mortal sin seldom in the long run achieves even that; and the

priest who remains quiescent and supine in a state of tepidity can hardly escape the commission of unnumbered deliberate venial sins altogether incongruous in one of his sacred calling. The failure of such a priest to follow Christ in positive and energetic fashion is not so much a matter, as he may affect to consider it, of his attaining a lower or a higher degree of glory in heaven, as it is a matter of his getting to heaven at all. Lukewarmness, clearly recognized and complacently indulged in, is assuredly no passport to the Kingdom whose Ruler has said: "I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." *Apoc. iii, 15, 16.* No latitudinarian concept of priestly obligations, no tolerant theory that is the offspring of habitual negligence and laxity and listlessness, will avail to alter the truth which sooner or later the most imperfect cleric will be obliged to face,—that in entering the priesthood he embraced a state of perfection, and that one of his prime and inescapable liabilities therein is the leading of a holy life, the imitation of Christ.

It is obvious of course that this imitation, even in the best of us, will be sadly imperfect; that our greatest efforts will enable us to follow Christ only at a long, long distance; but there is no ridding ourselves of the responsibility of making those efforts, and no prospect, either, that there will ever come a time when it will be easier to make them than it is at present. On the contrary, the longer we put off remodeling

our life in downright earnestness on the pattern of Our Divine Lord's, the harder will we find it to begin the necessary work, and the slighter will be the probability of our persevering therein. Procrastination is not only the avowed thief of time, but the sworn enemy of spiritual conversion. If our lives have any need of reforming in order that we may "be made conformable to the image of His Son," we cannot too speedily set about beginning the reformation.

Assuming that we do stand in need of at least some measure of reform, how is it to be effected? How can we verily and indeed imitate Christ, and what shall we do to follow Him? In the first place we can do the preliminary work by recalling, meditating, and thoroughly saturating our minds with the fundamental principles on which our whole life, all that we are and do, should be based. God's glory is the essential end aud purpose of our existence; it is the very *raison d'être* of our lives. "For none of us liveth to himself; and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." *Rom. xiv, 7, 8.* "And every one that calleth upon My name (saith the Lord) I have created him for My glory, for this I have formed him and made him." *Is. xliii, 7.* Commenting on the words of Ecclesiastes, "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man," St. Augustine asks: How can we put a more wholesome truth into fewer words? Fear God,

and keep His commandments: this is all man. All man, indeed, is there: This is true of everyone; he is a *keeper* of God's commandments; if he is not that, he is nothing. The image of the truth cannot be refashioned in him in whom dwells the likeness of vanity."

God's commandments are the expression of His will; and, if we are ever to imitate Christ in any real and effective sense, we must clearly go to the root of the matter and conform our will to God's. Following Christ is doing the will of His Father, as is evident from dozens of passages in the Gospels, notably in these from St. John: "Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work."—"Because I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."—"My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do the will of Him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—"And he that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him." Obviously, therefore, the first essential step in any endeavor to remodel our life so that it may bear some genuine resemblance to that of our Exemplar, is to bring our own will into thorough conformity with God's. Unless we habitually, and as it were, instinctively, put God's glory, God's interest above every other consideration in all our varied activities, our will is not conformable to His, and we are not following Christ but abandoning Him. If our will centres

upon creatures (using the word in its most absolute sense) rather than upon the Creator, if it chooses self-seeking, ambition, worldly possessions, fame, popularity, personal ease and comfort, luxurious apartments, dress, food and drink, human friendships, social pleasures, etc., rather than "the things that please Him," then the needle of our compass is deflected and our life is being steered astray.

It requires no very lengthy examination of conscience to determine whether or not God's glory is our principal aim in life, and God's will our habitual guide. If we are thoroughly in earnest in conducting the examination, we readily discover what it is that occupies the principal place in our thoughts day after day and month after month, what affection reigns supreme in our hearts, what aspirations or ambitions claim the innermost longings of our souls. The mere fact that on the surface, in the eyes of our people and of the world generally, we are leading exemplary priestly lives, apparently zealous in performing all the duties of our sacred ministry, will not blind us to the everlasting truth that external activities are the mere shell of good works, and that unless they hold within them the kernel of a pure intention, unless they are undertaken and carried out solely for the honor and glory of God, they are worthless for eternal life. "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within;" and all the value of my priestly labors, however multiplied and strenuous they may be, depends upon the interior motive that inspires them,

turns on the question whether they are performed, primarily and principally, if not solely and entirely, for God's glory,—or my own.

Supposing that we have finished the foundation of all true imitation of Christ, have conformed our will to that of the Father, in what specific external ways may we exemplify our resemblance to the Priest of priests who is our model? To enumerate them all would be to write another Life of Christ; let us content ourselves with the mention of only a few. In the estimation of the great mass of those who saw Our Lord during His sojourn on earth, as in that of the bulk of mankind from His day to ours, the outstanding characteristic, the dominant note of His personality was perhaps His kindness, gentleness, benignity. As emphasizing this quality, His whole life has been compressed into five words: "He went about doing good." Hence, the priest who wishes really to imitate his incomparable Master must do likewise. He must be a good man, not only in the sense that he is irreproachable in morals, is virtuous and pious, but also in the sense that he habitually does good deeds, is uniformly kind and obliging, delights in rendering service to others, is constant in doing good turns to his fellows, is gracious and charitable to the poor and needy, is sympathetic with the sick and sorrowing, is indulgent to the young, accommodating to the old, and affable to all. The priestly follower of Christ, in a word, radiates kindness and sympathy just as the sun radiates heat and light.

The Apostles' estimate of their Master's predominant quality would probably so far differ from that of the world at large as to give that name, not to His goodness, but to His zeal. And assuredly not without warrant. To Him in all their fulness apply the words of the Royal Psalmist: "For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." His passionate ardor for the glory of His Father is manifest on every page of the Gospel narrative. "I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?"—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest."—"And he saith to them: Let us go into the neighboring towns and cities, that I may preach there also; for this purpose am I come."—"And His mother said to Him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them—. How is that you sought me? Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" Thus it was ever throughout His mortal career; intense eagerness in the accomplishment of His Father's will, assiduous concern in looking after that Father's business, characterized the totality of His thirty-three years on earth.

Similar in kind, if unequal in degree, must be the zeal of a priest of whom it may be said without patent incongruity that he is a veritable follower of Christ. In the sphere of his pastoral influence he, too, is constantly busy about "the things that are God's," is never weary of promot-

ing the glory of the Father, the interests of His Church, and the spiritual welfare of those entrusted to his charge. He takes as addressed to himself individually the monition of St. Paul to Timothy: "Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No man being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular business; that he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself. . . . I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming, and his kingdom: Preach the word: be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. . . . But be thou vigilant, labor in all things, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry." Translating this advice into twentieth century terms, the present-day imitator of our Divine Exemplar is truly zealous, not merely in preaching the word, after due preparation, on Sundays and holydays, and in thoroughly catechizing his children, but in organizing sodalities and confraternities, in promoting frequent and daily Communion, in fostering adoration of the Sacred Heart, the sweet cult of our Blessed Mother, and other special devotions, in furnishing his people with the occasional opportunity of receiving the manifold graces of a Mission or a Triduum, in looking after the best interests of his school, and in encouraging by every means in his power the apostolate of the Catholic press.

If there is one specific phase of Our Lord's character which His priestly follower will especially strive to acquire, it is perhaps the tender-

ness evinced in His account of Himself as the Good Shepherd. Surely no cleric to whom has been confided the care of souls needs a stronger incentive to spend himself in recalling to their duty the negligent, indifferent, or recalcitrant members of his flock than is furnished by a perusal of that deathless idyl, the Parable of the Lost Sheep. "What man of you that hath a hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: And coming home, call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." There are in our day comparatively few, if any, pastors who have not frequent, not to say daily, occasion to display genuine Christ-like zeal in going after hardened sinners, or fallen away Catholics; and the measure of the tenderness and patience and longanimity which the priest displays in his untiring efforts to win such souls back to God may well be looked on as the measure in which he imitates our Divine Model. The supreme Good Shepherd gave His very life for His sheep, and His zealous follower will put up with much before abandoning even the most reckless and stubborn of his wandering flock.

Another respect in which the priest who is a

true follower of Christ may appropriately show his zeal is indicated by the Gospel account of Our Saviour's action when he found in the temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money. "And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also, and the oxen, and the money of the changers he poured out, and the tables he overthrew. And to them that sold doves he said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic." *John ii, 14-16.* The Church in whose tabernacle reposes the Real Presence of Jesus Christ Himself is far and away holier than was the temple of the Old Law, and the zealous priest will see to it that nothing derogatory to that holiness is visible within its walls. Cleanliness and neatness will characterize every portion of it, not excepting the sacristy; and the care given to the sacred vessels, as to the altar-linen and the vestments, will be commensurate with the reverence he entertains for the sublime rites and ceremonies in which they are used. Scrupulous attention to the multiplied details of those rites and ceremonies, from the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass down to the blessing of a sacramental, is one sign by which to discern a priest after Christ's own heart, a minister of the altar who can not only say with the Psalmist, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house; and the place where thy glory dwelleth," but can at need testify that he has obeyed St. Paul's admonition, "Let all things be done decently, and according to order."

As for the purely personal devotions of the priestly imitator of the Priest Divine, his knowledge of the Life of Our Lord teaches him that prayer,—earnest and frequent, not to say incessant, prayer,—is a duty from which he cannot with impunity dispense himself. By many a weighty word, and by His still weightier and more persuasive example, He has taught us to turn to our Heavenly Father in any and all conjunctures, —in peace and calm as in storm and stress, in sorrow and care as in joy and consolation, in time of danger as in the not less distressing periods of spiritual dryness, in every possible crisis that may confront us here below. Needless to say, the prayer of a real follower of Christ will be prayer indeed, the expression of veritable heart-yearnings, not mere verbal formulas perfunctorily recited and interrupted by a thousand and one more or less wilful distractions. "But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." *James i, 5-6.* "And this is the confidence which we have towards him: That whatsoever we shall ask according to his will, he heareth us." *1 John v, 14.*

As has been said on a former page, the essence of the imitation of Christ is the doing of God's will; and this is only another expression of the thought, "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is all man." What God's will *is* with regard to His priests, what specific commandments or laws He would have them

keep, is succinctly yet comprehensibly and adequately set forth in a modern treatise on the spiritual life, a few passages from which will prove not unwelcome to our readers. "The truly pious priest takes great pleasure in knowing, studying, and getting a mastery of the laws of his state in life. Does he not find everything in his liturgical and disciplinary laws? Seeking God, forgetting self: this is the whole of piety. Does he not find that seeking God is admirably marked out for him by the liturgical laws? and forgetfulness of self by disciplinary laws? Here he has the entire form of his piety. . . . The good priest knows what a wonderful treasure he has in these grand laws of the Church his mother. Moreover, he makes them the favorite subject of his meditations, spiritual readings and silent studies. Therefrom he draws instructive illumination and abundance of strength. The books of the Church are the books of his choice: their official text is the favorite food of his mind. And where could he find anything more beautiful or more wholesome? Above all, where could he find the voice and will of God better expressed? . . . The priest should make the liturgy so far enter into his relations with God, and canon law into his relations with men, that he comes at last to get into the spirit of them. Only the spirit is living, for the letter is dead. . . . . Liturgy and canon law, taken in the letter and in the spirit, mean sacerdotal life in its fullness of form, the priest raised above the human and brought near to God, the ministry of holy things lifted above

the lower conditions of humanity and established in the region of things divine; in a word, it means that the priest has entered into the fullness of the truth and power of his vocation."[1]

The soundness of the foregoing doctrine will hardly be questioned. Even the most ardent follower of Christ, the most painstaking imitator of the priestly Exemplar, can scarcely choose a better way of pleasing Him than to obey His Spouse, the Church, in the minor as well as the major affairs of life. Whoever listens to her voice and heeds her counsels need have no doubt as to the conformity of his will with God's. And whosoever, priest or layman, makes the will of God his own, has no other will than the Father's, he is in very deed and truth a follower of Christ, closely and lovingly imitating Him in this present life, and destined to see Him face to face forever in the life to come.

[1] "The Interior Life."

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